

Red Elderberry

Sambucus racemosa



Low clumps of Red Elderberry dot the meadow slopes of Cedar Breaks National Monument. The spires of white flowers in early summer are replaced by bright red berries later in the growing season. The foliage and flowers have a strong, unpleasant odor and, unlike the fruits of Blue Elderberry which can be made into jelly or wine, Red Elderberry fruits are considered to be slightly poisonous. The two elderberry species can be distinguished because the flower heads of Blue Elderberry are flat-topped rather than rounded or cone-shaped as in Red Elderberry. Its fruits are black with a bluish waxy bloom rather than red as well. Blue Elderberry is not reported from the Cedar Breaks but can be found at lower elevations in Cedar Canyon.

The scientific name, *Sambucus*, comes from an ancient stringed instrument, the sambuca, supposedly made from the hollow stems of elderberry.