

Sambucus nigra L. subsp. *caerulea* (Raf.) Bolli, BLUE ELDERBERRY. Tree, winter-deciduous to evergreen, multiple-trunked, in range flowering specimens 2.5–7 m tall; shoots sparsely puberulent or essentially glabrous. **Stems:** when young cylindrical, light green, glabrous except occasionally puberulent around nodes. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, odd-1-pinnately compound with 1–3(–5) pairs of lateral leaflets (occasionally 1-foliolate or 2-pinnately compound with some 3-foliolate lateral primary leaflets), 50–215 mm long, petiolate, without stipules; petiole 5–70 mm long, groove-channeled, the 2 ridges sparsely puberulent; rachis often channeled, typically with cluster of glandular hairs at each junction with petiolules; petiolules 0–15 mm long; blades of leaflets narrowly to broadly elliptic or ovate, typically 20–60(–80) mm × 10–30(–45) mm, conspicuously asymmetric at base (lateral leaflets) and ± symmetric (terminal leaflet), serrate on margins, acute at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins slightly sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, dark green, upper surface ± glossy, sometimes with appendages at base of blade of a lateral leaflet or on petiolule, the appendage club-shaped, 2–3 mm long, green. **Inflorescence:** panicle of cymes or an umbel-like cluster of cymes, terminal, compound with primary rays opposite decussate + 1 terminal central ray, ± flat-topped, typically 80–150 mm diameter, many-flowered, bracteate, glabrous; bract subtending each of the lowest rays, leaflike but simple (1-foliolate) and reduced, narrowly elliptic, smaller for upper rays, deciduous; central ray often much thinner than rays of other cymes; bracts or bractlets ± paired subtending each node throughout inflorescence, cupped-ovate, < 1 mm long, whitish, short-ciliate, abscising at anthesis or during early fruit development; pedicel 0.2–3 mm long, constricted at tip, persistent. **Flower:** bisexual, radial with parts in sets of (4–)5–6, 4–5 mm across, never closing, mildly fragrant; **calyx** (4–)5–6-lobed, whitish; tube short; lobes ascending to spreading, triangular, ± 0.5 mm long; **corolla** (4–)5(–6)-lobed, rotate, often remaining above ovary after pollination but easily dislodged; tube short; lobes overlapping in bud, spreading or at anthesis cupped upward slightly, elliptic to rounded, 2 × 1.2–2 mm, typically 1 lobe somewhat wider, pale yellow turning creamy white; **stamens** (4–)5–6, fused to corolla between corolla lobes; filaments erect to ascending or spreading, free portion < 0.5 mm long; anthers basifixed, dithecal, < 1 mm long, pale yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale yellow; **pistil** 1, ± 2 mm long; ovary half-inferior, subspheric to ovoid, yellowish green, (2–)3–5-chambered, each chamber with 1 pendent ovule; styles (2–)3–5, ascending in a ring with depression in center, extremely short; stigmas 0.2–0.4 mm long, conspicuously papillate. **Fruit:** drupe, spheric, 4–5 mm, blackish purple and glaucous so appearing blue due to surface wax (individual plants with fruits not glaucous), with calyx lobes persistent and appressed to top of fruit; mesocarp fleshy, juicy; stone (endocarp) (2–)3–5-parted, very hard, triangular, ± 2.5 mm long, yellowish, rough cobblestonelike to ± transversely wrinkled. Late November–early October.

Native. Small tree extremely common throughout the range, occurring in woodlands, tall chaparral, scattered in grasslands, and along trails and roadsides, wherever their fruits are distributed by birds. Our elderberry, until recently, was treated as *Sambucus mexicana* but now is recognized as a subspecies of a widespread species of the Northern Hemisphere. The principal flowering period is from late winter through early summer, but within the range it is possible to find flowers in every month. Typically blue elderberry is deciduous

during winter months, especially in the coldest localities, but individuals can be found in range, as well as young plants, that retain leaves year-round. Although fruits are typically glaucous, and therefore blue in appearance, in the center of the range (e.g., Malibu Creek State Park), and probably elsewhere, individual plants can be found having fruits that are nearly black, because thick surface wax is absent.

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