

GARDENING & WILDLIFE CENTER

Gardening in the Back Country



By LYNN NEFF

I have learned by living here in the back country that we have an abundance of "weeds." We call anything that grows where we don't want it a weed. There are some good weeds, however. You would be surprised just how many of our weeds can be beautiful plants, shrubs or flowers if maintained. You can actually have a whole yard of wild plants that take very little water, and yet are quite pleasing when arranged in an artistic form.

Water is a commodity in short supply all over San Diego County as it has become in all areas of Southern California. We need to think about growing plants that can live without so much water. I have planted an abundance of plants around my yard that don't take a lot of water. Some examples are California poppies, many varieties of cactus which have the most beautiful blooms this time of year, and other plants, shrubs and trees that require minimum care, which I will be identifying in subsequent articles.

One of the flowers that I plant heavily around my house are Four O'clocks. They come in a variety of colors ranging from white and delicate pink to orange-red and yellow blends. They grow just about anywhere in our area and

provide weed abatement as well as beautiful flowers for the bees and hummingbirds; and a lovely fragrance that fills the area where they are planted.

One of the wild bushes that we see so often growing around the back country is the elderberry. These are usually the first plants to green up after the winter. Their leaves start appearing in the early spring and they flower when the weather starts getting a little warmer. These berries turn to a purplish fruit in the early summer.

The elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) is a member of the honeysuckle family and can grow up to 13' high. When the berries are ripe they can be picked and used in some delicious recipes, one of which appears at the end of this article. The berries have few calories and lots of nutrition. They provide very large amounts of potassium and beta-carotene, as well as sugar and fruit acids, calcium, phosphorous and vitamin C.

The flowers themselves make a wonderful food, as well. Try elder flower (sometimes called elderblow) fritters using your favorite tempura or pancake batter. Make a light, mild batter, so you don't overpower the delicate flowers. Try sautéing them.

Elder flowers make a pleasant tasting tea, especially with mint. They also make a potent, fragrant wine. Steeped in vinegar—they add flavor and strengthen the stomach. It is said that the elderberry contains medicinal properties.

In researching the elderberry I have come across some interesting information. The

Elderberry leaves and stems can actually contain a toxin and should not be used. Some years ago children used the branches for pea shooters and became deathly ill. However, the dried crumbled leaves make a good insecticide in the garden.

Hercules' club is a shrub or small tree with feather-compound leaves that looks a little like the common elderberry. It has flat clusters of poisonous, black berries, often arranged in a ring, and a short, unbranched, thorny trunk. Elderberries are thornless.

Recipe: Elderberry Crunch Bread - Wild Food Recipe by Annie B. Bond

Elderberries are the size of cultivated currants but very strongly flavored, crunchy, and not as sweet. Raw, they have a slightly rank flavor and give some people indigestion, so always cook them. You may also dehydrate and reconstitute them before you use them.

Here is a recipe that demonstrates how good elderberries taste if you use them sparingly, with other ingredients, and sweeten the recipe.

This bread contains all kinds of things crunchy: sunflower seeds, coconut, granola, and, of course, elderberries.

INGREDIENTS

3 3/4 cups rye flour and 1 1/3 cups barley flour, or 1 1/3 any whole-grain flour
5 tablespoons freshly ground flax seeds
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt



The Common Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) Flowering

3 1/4 cups apple juice or other unsweetened fruit juice
2 tablespoons corn oil
1 teaspoon coconut extract (optional)
1 teaspoon amaretto extract (optional)
2 cups elderberries
1 cup granola
1 cup shelled raw sunflower seeds

1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
2 tablespoons lecithin granules
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

2. Mix the flour, ground flax seeds, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. 3. In a medium-size bowl, mix together the apple juice, liquid stevia, if you are using it, lemon juice, corn oil, and extracts. Mix the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, being careful not to

overmix. Stir in the elderberries, granola, sunflower seeds, coconut, and lecithin.

4. Press the dough into 2 oiled 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 2 1/2- inch bread pans. Sprinkle the cinnamon on top. Set a pan of hot water on the bottom of the oven to keep the crust soft. Bake the loaves until a toothpick inserted in the center emerges clean, about 1 hour.

5. Remove the loaves from the oven and let them cool on a wire rack before slicing.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

For more information about the elderberry and more recipes please visit the following source sites.

Sources: <http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/Plants.Folder/Elderberry.html>, <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/elderberry-crunch-bread.html>.

Pet Tips - Protecting Your Pets From Wild Animals

By JENNIFER KING

Coyote Ugly

July comes with fireworks and brings summer in with a bang. We here at Kings Castle Kennels are all settled into our new home just in time for our daughter Alexis' birthday. Our Dehesa neighbors have welcomed us and made us feel right at home. It was a tough move from Campo and we miss everyone very much.

When we first moved to Dehesa we had an unfortunate run in with a coyote. We understand and respect the laws of nature but have heard countless stories of people's pets becoming part of the coyote menu. Because of these stories, we have made sure that our pets are kept in secure housing areas and that our property is fenced in. All of this did not stop a coyote from climbing our six foot fence, digging under our kennel located right by our bedroom window and snatching our puppy. This was a complete shock to us. We are surrounded by neighbors with large barking dogs. Even our rottweiler, Shatzie, did not phase the animal in the least.

We are all sad, but now all the wiser on coyotes and would like to share some helpful tips with you to protect your pets.

Keep small animals in the house if possible, or make sure that they are in a coyote proof fenced in area. Make sure rabbit hutches and chicken coops have solid bottoms; wire bottoms make for easy prey. Don't feed coyotes by leaving pet food outside. Make sure trash is secure. Even feeding wild birds can attract other small prey like mice, rats and squirrels which are all prey to coyotes. Clean out brush and weeded areas where rodents like to live. Coyotes even like to make healthy choices by including fruits and vegetables in their diets, so make sure your garden is fenced in with a coyote proof fence and fallen fruit from trees are picked up. Make sure when you are outside you make loud noises to scare them away. Playing music will also discourage them from coming around. Another useful technique is to scatter moth balls on your fence line and strategically place ammonia soaked rags where coyotes roam. These techniques are not fool proof and a very smart



& hungry coyote that has become desensitized to humans may not care what you do to deter them. If they are hungry, they will come.

Some people will shoot a coyote on sight, which will solve their problem with that one coyote. But this breed of animal is very resilient. Coyotes out of all wild canines are the most adaptable in nature and their population comes back strong. If the coyote population is low, nature takes over and a female will

produce 8-10 pups. If there is an excess of coyotes, making food scarce, females will produce only 4-6 pups or none at all. If food is really scarce, coyotes are even known to kill one another. So less food sources mean less coyotes.

We hope these tips are useful so that none of your beloved pets become the next coyote meal.

Have a wonderful Fourth of July everyone!

BEWARE!

The weather has cooled off the past few weeks, but it is going to start heating up again, so watch out for ...



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