

CUISINART FOR CLEANING ELDERBERRY (*SAMBUCUS* SPP. L. [CAPRIFOLIACEAE]) SEEDS

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ABSTRACT

The common food processor is an effective tool for cleaning elderberry (*Sambucus* spp. L. [Caprifoliaceae]) seeds. Seeds cleaned with this device can be stored in the refrigerator for years without developing mold.

KEY WORDS

seed cleaning

NOMENCLATURE

USDA NRCS (2002)

I prefer using a food processor, the kitchen Cuisinart (Model DFP Deluxe 11), for cleaning seeds of elderberry (*Sambucus* spp. L. [Caprifoliaceae]). At Cornflower Farms, we collect *Sambucus* berries in the wild at site-specific locations throughout California. Once we get the berries back to the nursery, we remove them by hand from the stems as the first step in the seed cleaning process. Then we add the berries to the food processor (Figure 1). Depending on how juicy the berries are, we may or may not need to add water. If the berries clump to the sides of the processor, we add enough water to ensure they swirl.

We run the food processor for about 1 min until we have a puree of berries. The puree is poured into a clean, empty bucket and then we slowly add water (Figure 2). Viable seeds sink to the bottom of the bucket while voided seeds and pulp float to the surface. The waste is decanted off the top and we keep repeating the process until we are left with clean seeds at the bottom of the bucket. The reason we pulled the berries off the stems is that otherwise the food processor chops the stems into little pieces that sink to the bottom of the bucket with the clean seeds. Once clean, we drain off all of the water and place the seeds on newspaper to surface dry (Figure 3), which may take 1 to 4 d depending on temperature and relative humidity. This process cleans seeds so well they can be stored in a refrigerator for 6 to 8 y without mold problems. Also, we found that seeds cleaned with the food processor are less likely to mold and rot during the 3-mo cold, moist stratification period necessary for germination.

REFERENCE

USDA NRCS. 2002. The PLANTS database, version 3.5. URL: <http://plants.usda.gov> (accessed 14 Aug 2003). Baton Rouge (LA): The National Plant Data Center.



Figure 1. Elderberry fruits ready for cleaning and my trusty food processor.



Figure 2. Floating the debris away from clean seeds.



Figure 3. Clean elderberry seeds ready for storage.

Photos by Michelle Truscott

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