

Hello Trees Resource Sheet

What to look for outdoors in early Summer

Elderflowers



Have a magnifying glass in your pocket.



Who would have thought there were so many elder trees about!



It is not until the creamy, 10-cm, saucer-shaped flowers cover the trees that we realise that elders are in just about every hedge, along every railway line, alongside bigger trees in every park and along every roadway.



Elder flowers

Get close to the flowers and give them a sniff.



You will find that they have a strong fragrance.

Do you like the smell?



Does it remind you of anything?

Have you ever had elderflower cordial?



Yes, this is the elderflower they it is made from.



Elder flowers



Is the flower one great big flower?



Or is it an **inflorescence**: a cluster of flowers on a stem with branches?



Elder flowers

Look underneath and you will see that you were quite right: there are lots of little flowers held up on a branching stem.

In fact, the branches branch!



Can you think of an advantage to a tree to have lots of flowers together?



Clue: elders are insect pollinated.

Yes, you are right: lots of flowers together are more noticeable to insects.

Insects carry pollen from the flowers of one elder tree to the flowers of other elder trees.



Insect pollinator on elder flowers

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Lets have a close look at each flower.



Look at the **petals**.



How many petals does each flower have?
Do the petals curve up? Or back?



Elder flowers magnified



Look for the **filaments**. They stick up out of the flower.



Is there the same number of filaments on each flower?



Look for the **anthers**, the swellings at the end of each filament.
The anthers are full of pollen. Pollen brushes from the anthers on to insects.



What colour are the anthers?



Look for the **stigmas**, the blob in the centre of each flower.
Stigmas gather pollen as it brushes off insects.

Fruit will develop only when pollen falls on the stigma and fuses with ovaries below.



That's why insects are so important: No pollination, no fruit!



What do you think elder fruit will look like? Like a great big apple? Like strawberries? Like blackcurrants? Lots of little seeds with wings?



Now we have something to look out for: elder berries. What colour will they be?



Remember! No insect visitors, no fruit. See [Hello Trees](#) for more about pollination.
We really need those insects to visit our elderflowers.



Is there something else about the elder flowers that will attract insects?



Yes, their fragrance. Insects, especially flies, are attracted by the lovely smell.



And so are we!

Next week let's think about making some elderflower cordial of our own.



It is fun to make a note, take photos, do a sound recording of what you saw and did today - and what you think the coming fruits might look like. Set a reminder to keep looking for elderberries.



For more about trees, fun things to look for and do indoors and outdoors, interesting facts about trees - and about Hello Trees books, see the [Hello Trees website](#).