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Figure 1. One-y-old elderberry plant of accession 9084126 propagated from seed. Photo by Sergio A Perez

Comparison of seed germination techniques for common elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. ssp. *canadensis*)

John W Leif, John C Durling, and David W Burgdorf

ABSTRACT

Soaking common elderberry seeds (*Sambucus nigra* L. ssp. *canadensis* (L.) R. Bolli [Caprifoliaceae]) in sulfuric acid followed by a 60-d stratification, or subjecting common elderberry seeds to a 60-d warm, moist treatment followed by a 90-d stratification, significantly increased seed germination of accession 9084126 common elderberry seeds. Stratification alone was less effective in promoting germination than was acid scarification followed by stratification or warm, moist treatment followed by stratification. Germination of common elderberry seeds soaked in hot water was not significantly different from the control treatment.

Leif JW, Durling JC, Burgdorf DW. 2011. Comparison of seed germination techniques for common elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. ssp. *canadensis*). *Native Plants Journal* 12(2):132–135.

KEY WORDS

American black elderberry, stratification, scarification, sulfuric acid, Caprifoliaceae

NOMENCLATURE

USDA NRCS (2011)

Common elderberry, also known as American black elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. ssp. *canadensis* (L.) R. Bolli [Caprifoliaceae]), is a woody shrub that grows 2 to 5 m (80 to 200 in) tall (US Forest Service 1948). Common elderberry can grow in a variety of soil conditions. It can tolerate saturated soils but usually occupies well-drained, slightly acidic soil (pH 5.5 to 6.0) bordering streams and in adjacent bottomlands. It also grows on gray forest soils and muck (Laurie and Chadwick 1931). Common elderberry has an extensive root system that is useful for stabilizing streambanks, lakeshores, and other moist, erosion-prone sites.