



Elderberries:

LGBT Seniors

Could you be an Elderberry?

Are you fifty or older; lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or two-spirited and looking for a mixed social group beyond the bar scene? Elderberries may be the group for you.

Not from Halifax? Join anyway! Many out-of-town members enjoy our newsletters.

There are now more than a hundred members.

What do we do?

Programs and potluck socials

Elderberries meet monthly, usually on Sunday, in a wheelchair-accessible location. Social, educational, and recreational programs have so far included:

- cultural events such as a visit to a gallery featuring a gay artist, a poetry writing workshop, and music/poetry performances by Elderberry members
- community history shown in photos of the LGBT past;
- lectures on legal and medical topics;
- discussions on memories of coming out, on long-term care, and on being an older LGBT single; and
- presentations by other LGBT organizations.

A social follows each program, with a potluck provided by the members, featuring a mix of home-made or store-bought main dishes, snacks, or sweets. Coffee and tea are provided.

Meetings are alcohol-free, scent-free, and pet-free. Assistance dogs are welcome.

Publications

Monthly newsletters tell members about upcoming programs and other events. Our 2011 Cookbook featured recipes contributed by Elderberry chefs, and sold out its first print run in a couple of weeks!

Contact point for researchers

The Elderberries have provided a contact point for researchers doing work on LGBT health and history, for example: the *Hello Sailor!* exhibit of LGBT seafarers at Maritime Museum of the Atlantic; an oral history project about Citadel Hill; and the Dalhousie Health Mentors Program.

Feedback on elders' issues

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project frequently draws on the Elderberries for feedback on elders' issues. Elderberries have assisted in the development and presentation of a training document on long-term care.

How can I join?

Membership is free. To join, send an email to:

elderberries.scotia2@gmail.com

You can also sign up at any Elderberries event. Our membership list is kept confidential.

Elderberries is an affiliate of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP). NSRAP seeks equality for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.



Since 1995, NSRAP has sought to foster change in our communities and our society at large so that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued and included, through community development, networking, outreach, education, and political action.

NSRAP strives to provide a coherent voice for gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirited, transsexual, transgender and queer people — a group we refer to as the “Rainbow Community” — throughout Nova Scotia.

For more on NSRAP, see <http://nsrap.ca>

NSRAP and Elderberries:

NSRAP became the parent organization of the Elderberries when it hosted a “Gathering of Elders” in April 2010, at which increased social opportunities for LGBT elders, and support for LGBT elders in long-term care were identified as priorities. Several participants followed up by organizing the first of the monthly potluck socials in August 2010.

What's in a name?

What is an elderberry, anyway?

There are five to thirty varieties of elderberry, two of which grow in Nova Scotia. A true rainbow plant, it may have berries of blue, purple, red, black, or (rarely) white or yellow. The makers of Harris tweed used the berries, leaves, and bark of elderberry to produce natural dyes of blue, purple, green, yellow, grey, or black.

The leaves, twigs, roots, bark, and uncooked berries are poisonous, containing a chemical that can lead to a toxic buildup of cyanide in the body, but the cooked berries have been used in foods and in folk medicine, and the medical possibilities of elderberry are being tested today.

Elderberry flowers have been used externally in creams, washes, and poultices to treat skin conditions. A British study indicated elderberry's effectiveness against the H1N1 virus. Because of its antiviral and immune system activation properties, it has been used in Israel in the treatment of AIDS patients.

Folklore:

- elderberry repelled evil, and was often planted by the back door to keep out evil spirits
- whoever slept under an elderberry bush on Midsummer Eve could see the faery king and queen pass by in the night
- a spirit called the Elder Mother lived in the elderberry tree, and would take her revenge if it were cut down
- the most powerful wand in the world of Harry Potter is made of elder wood

*Information on the elderberry was gathered from: museum.gov.ns.ca/poison, drugs.com/npp/elderberry.html, herbwisdom.com/herb-elderberry.html, naturalremedies.org/elderberry, treesforlife.org.uk and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sambucus. The cover image is *The Elderberry Fairy* by Cicely Mary Barker, 1926, *elderred and fairyed* by Anita Martinez.*

