



Elderberries:

LGBT Seniors & Allies

Could you be an Elderberry?

Are you 50 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 and events. There are now almost 200 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 included:

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

Our regular events include a summer picnic and a December holiday party.

A pot luck social follows each program, featuring a mix of home-made or store-bought main dishes, snacks, or sweets. Coffee and tea are provided. Meetings are peanut-free, alcohol-free, scent-free, and pet-free. Assistance dogs are welcome.

Publications

Monthly email newsletters tell members about upcoming programs and other events. Our Elderberries 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 at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic; an oral history project about Citadel Hill; the Nova Scotia Sexual Health Centres' Annual conference, and local news stories.

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 confidential.

You may also "Like" us on Facebook - just search for "NSElderberries."

Speaking Engagements

The Elderberries are often called on to speak to schools, community groups, and other organizations.

We are the living history of the transition from being outcasts to moving towards the centre of society and are happy to share that story.

The Speaker's Bureau is available to make presentations, attend workshops, and act as a resource; contact us at:

elderberries.scotia2@gmail.com

Community Partners

Elderberries is committed to working with our community partners including Halifax Pride, NSRAP, The Youth Project, Pride Heath, the Rainbow Refugees, and others.

History Of The Elderberries

NSRAP became the parent organization of the Elderberries when it hosted a "Gathering of Elders" in April 2010. At this meeting, increased social opportunities 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.

