

The Wild Epicurean

Elderberries (Sambucus species)

By Christal Whelan
cwhelan@turley.com

If your elderberry bushes are in their first year, you needn't worry that deer are browsing on them just as they are beginning to produce the buds of their fragrant white flowers.

In the first year these flower clusters, called "cymes" or "blows," should be cut off anyway in order to strengthen the root system as much as possible. During the second year you can cut some and leave some on the bush, but by the third year the bushes will probably be well established and ready to produce ample berries for harvest.

One way to provide the elderberry bush with optimum nourishment is to place ramial mulch around the base of the bushes to about 4-inches deep. Ramial mulch, made from the branches and young stems of deciduous trees, has a higher ratio of cambium to cellulose than chips made from heartwood.

It is especially good for fruit trees because it has the ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio for promoting soil fungi and building up organic matter.

Elderflowers bloom in May and June for a couple of weeks before producing the green to red and then purplish black berries. Once your bushes are established, deer may like to browse on the cymes and you will have little left with which to make elderberry flower fritters or elderberry cordial, both made from the flowers, or anything that will later require the berries.

How can the gardener or homesteader deter deer from destroying their elderberries? The secret lies in the deer's nose.

The deer's olfactory sense is very acute, having evolved to help them find food at great distances, and also to detect predators. But because of their heavy reliance on this one sense, they



Close-up of the elderberry leaves – compound, opposite leaves with lance-shaped leaflets.



Samyl Elderberry (Sambucus nigra cultivar), prized for its sweet berries, showing the ramial mulch at the base.

avoid strong odors that might easily overwhelm their normal sense of smell and interfere with their detection of a nearby predator.

Some of the plants with powerful fragrances which they tend to avoid browsing on for this reason are: lavender, garlic and mint. While you can grow these plants at the base of your elderberry bushes, it will take a few seasons to get established.

In the meantime, to make a deer repellent to spray directly on the elderberry bushes, mix 15 drops each of mint, lavender, and clove essential oil with a cup of vinegar, a tablespoon of light cooking oil, and a teaspoon of dish detergent in a spray bottle.

Spray the bush on strategic areas to discourage deer from coming too close.

To make elderberry flower fritters, cut the cymes from the bush, but don't wash them; they contain beneficial pollen and yeast.

Holding them by the stem with the blossoms facing downward, dip them in the batter made by mixing ½ cup of flour, ½ cup of milk, 1 egg, and ½ teaspoon sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt.

Then fry them until light brown in hot oil with a neutral scent (canola or safflower).

While there are many ways to make and serve elderberry flower fritters, they are especially popular in Austria and Germany where they are sometimes eaten with vanilla ice cream.

SJC denies Comtois' request for further review of conflict-of-interest decision

BROOKFIELD -- The Supreme Judicial Court has denied former Brookfield Selectman Stephen Comtois's application for further appellate review of the Appeals Court decision upholding the State Ethics Commission's Aug. 18, 2020 decision that he violated the conflict-of-interest law.

Following an adjudicatory hearing, the Commission found that Comtois had violated the conflict-of-interest law by acting as a Brookfield selectman to derail a proposed donation of land to the town so that he could purchase the land for himself and ordered Comtois to pay a \$20,000 civil penalty. Comtois appealed to the Superior Court, which upheld the Commission's decision and order, and then appealed to the Appeals Court, which affirmed the Superior Court decision. With the Supreme Judicial Court's denial of Comtois's application for further appellate review, the Appeals Court decision upholding the Commission's decision and order stands as decisional law. Comtois must now pay the \$20,000 civil penalty.

Comtois's conflict-of-interest law violations date to 2016, when a former Brookfield resident offered to donate a parcel of undeveloped land to the town because she believed it was unbuildable and over-assessed. The town taxed the land as buildable and assessed its value as \$43,900.

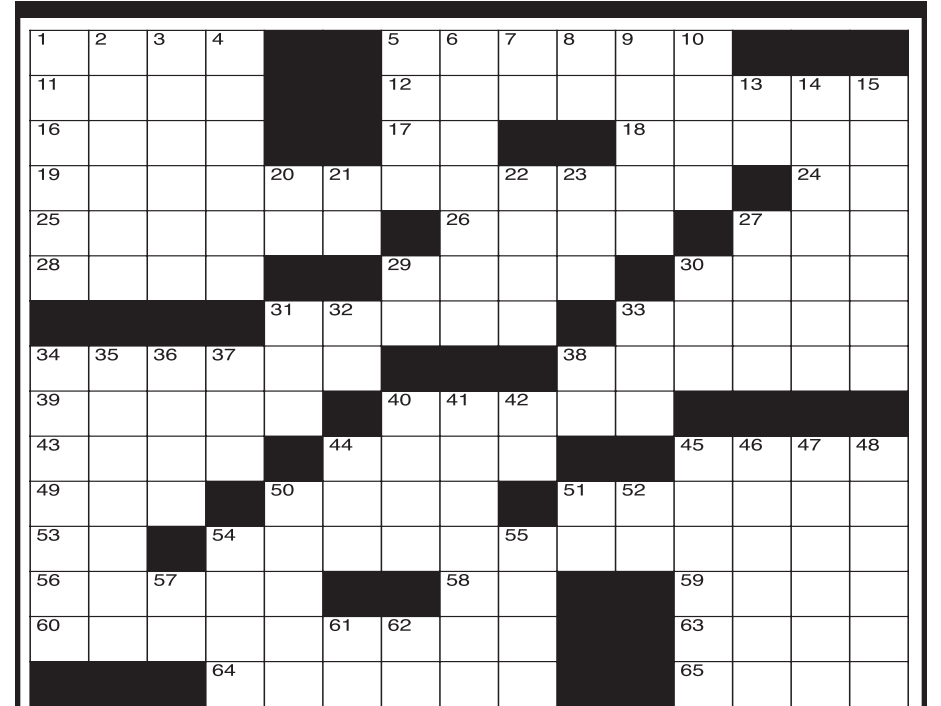
Although interested in purchasing the land himself, Comtois voted as a selectman to submit the proposed land donation to an upcoming Town Meeting, then volunteered to serve as the Board

of Selectmen's liaison to the landowner. As a selectman, Comtois contacted the landowner's real estate broker, misled her into believing the Board of Selectmen opposed the proposed land donation, then offered to buy the land himself.

Comtois never informed the town of his intent to purchase the land and dodged questions from the town's assistant assessor regarding the status of the land donation. Comtois then purchased the property for \$200 and agreed to pay legal expenses associated with the purchase.

Through his actions as a selectman concerning the land donation, Comtois violated the conflict-of-interest law's prohibition against municipal employees participating as such in matters in which they know they have a financial interest. In addition, by using his position as selectman to derail the donation of the land to the town so he could purchase it for himself, Comtois violated the law's prohibition against public employees using their official positions to obtain valuable, unwarranted privileges that are not available to similarly situated persons.

The State Ethics Commission is charged with civilly enforcing the conflict-of-interest law, G.L. c. 268A. The Commission encourages public employees to contact the Commission's Legal Division at 617-371-9500 for free advice if they have any questions regarding how the conflict-of-interest law may apply to them.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Database management system
- 5. Medical procedures
- 11. ___ Clapton, musician
- 12. Defender
- 16. Exert oneself
- 17. Indicates position
- 18. Prevents river overflow
- 19. Atrocities
- 24. Mister
- 25. Ends
- 26. Slope or tilt
- 27. Taxi
- 28. The very ends
- 29. Actor Sean
- 30. Japanese persimmon
- 31. Sours
- 33. Beneficiary
- 34. Baseball official
- 38. Muddy, boggy ground
- 39. Not worldly
- 40. Actress Lathan
- 43. Soil
- 44. ___-Cola
- 45. Asleep
- 49. ___ Angeles
- 50. Give birth to a child
- 51. Beach shelter
- 53. Commercial
- 54. Taste property
- 56. Local jurisdictions
- 58. It cools your home
- 59. Dismounted from a horse
- 60. Charge with a crime
- 63. Close in
- 64. Spoke
- 65. Famed garden
- 5. Abba ___, Israeli politician
- 6. Saw
- 7. "Westworld" actor
- 8. Belonging to me
- 9. Shoelace tube
- 10. Takes to court
- 13. Early multimedia
- 14. In a way, produces
- 15. Bowlers
- 20. Of I
- 21. Equally
- 22. Gets some sun
- 23. A place to stay
- 27. Town in Galilee
- 29. Aronofsky film
- 30. Klingon character, "Star Trek"
- 31. Equal to 100 square meters
- 32. Atomic #58
- 33. Arrived extinct
- 34. Loosen grip
- 35. A distinctive odor that is unpleasant
- 36. Membranes
- 37. Some is poisonous
- 38. Partner to Pa
- 40. Small brown gray rail
- 41. A salt or ester of acetic acid
- 42. Sodium
- 44. Military official (abbr.)
- 45. Lighted
- 46. Took off
- 47. All
- 48. Ohio city
- 50. More abstract
- 51. A radio band
- 52. Controversial tech product (abbr.)
- 54. Monetary unit
- 55. Passed with flying colors
- 57. A way to win a boxing match
- 61. The Golden State
- 62. Home of the Longhorns

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Draw a scene
- 2. Its sultan is famous
- 3. Unlucky accident
- 4. A way to ski

legal notices

Town of North Brookfield Board of Selectmen Public Hearing Notice

The North Brookfield Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on the application of Connect Restaurant NB for a new On-Premise All Liquor Restaurant License at 341 North Main Street, North Brookfield, MA 01535. The hearing will be held at **6:15PM on Tuesday, August 1, 2023** at the North Brookfield Police Department, located at 55 School Street, during the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. All interested parties are urged to attend.

Jason M Petraitis,
Chairman
Board of Selectmen
June 28, 2023

TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD LEGAL NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 138, Section 15, a public hearing will be held on **Tuesday, July 25, 2023, at 6:00 PM** in the Lower-Level Meeting Room, 2 East Main Street, West Brookfield, MA on the application for a Transfer of License to Shri Sai Ram, LLC d/b/a Main Street Liquors, with a Manager of Record as Abhishek Gupta located at 11 East Main Street, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

The public is invited to attend with any comments or concerns.
07/14/2023

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.