June Hort Report

Today I’m talking about Sambucus nigra ‘Eva’, a cultivar of European Elderberry commonly called Black Lace Elderberry. This is a beautiful deciduous shrub with finely cut purple leaves and pale pink flowers. The young stems are also purple, turning grey as they mature. This shrub gets 6 to 8 feet tall and wide, and gets its best color in full sun, although the plant will tolerate light shade. This plant is great as a single specimen, or as a hedge. It spreads by suckers, which can be cut off, or left to naturalize. S. nigra ‘Eva’ likes a moist location, but will tolerate dry clay soils. The tiny reddish-black berries, popular with birds, can be made into jelly or wine, but the American Elderberry, Sambucus canadensis is better for this purpose. ‘Eva’s flowers, held in flat cymes up to 10 inches across, have a lemony scent.

My shrub is on the East side of my house, where it looks wonderful against the white stucco wall. I keep it pruned so it is rather flat against the wall, in a loose espaliered type form. Mine has never suckered, and is in a dry situation. Butterflies are attracted to the fragrant flowers; I don’t recommend bringing the flowers indoors, however, as the smell is more unpleasant than lemony in close quarters.