

It's a Gardener's World

On my walks round Stokesley, I've come across this striking shrub (there's a very impressive specimen towards the end of Northfield Close!) in many front gardens. With its intense purple-black foliage & its saucers of tiny pink flowers, it is quite stunning.



I didn't have a clue what it was but when I looked it up on Google I discovered it was the 'Sambucus nigra Black Beauty' or 'Noir Elder Sambuca Plant'. The foliage provides season long interest and colour & the unique, massive, pink flowers cover the plant in midsummer and emit a light lemon fragrance. Dark purple berries in late summer attract songbirds and can be used to make wine! The Sambucus 'Black Beauty' is known for attracting bees, birds and other pollinators. It has nectar/pollen rich flowers, provides shelter and habitat, has seeds for birds and makes a good wildlife hedge. How amazing! But what surprised me most was to learn that it belongs to the Elder family of plants. The common Elder bears sprays of tiny white flowers in early summer followed by small black fruit which can be cooked and eaten, or used to make a refreshing summer drink. But compared to the common elder, the 'Black Beauty' is a much more ornamental option.

No doubt you'll have heard a lot, lately, about the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign. The official **#BlackLivesMatter** Global Network builds power to bring justice, healing, and freedom to Black people across the globe. It's a shame that recent protests have been hijacked by violence & hooliganism but the underlying principles of BLM are strong & well-intended.

This is a quote from a statement on racism made by the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference (you can read the full statement on the www.methodist.org.uk website): 'The Methodist Church in Britain believes that racism is a denial of the gospel ... we ... are actively working on the implementation of our 'Inclusive Methodist Church' strategy which commits to challenging all forms of discrimination and creating a Church where people from every background are welcome and are safe from abuse and discrimination.'

So this week's message is a lesson from the Elder family – black or white, whatever colour or creed, WE too belong to ONE family in the eyes of God & we are all beautiful, useful & unique in all our special ways.