Project goals:

⇒ Successfully cultivate elderberries for a profitable, yet sustainable harvest.

⇒ Open up our operation for tours and workshops to educate interested parties.

⇒ Develop value-added elderberry products.

WSARE Producer grant helped with funding:

⇒ Part-time wages to clear acre of land

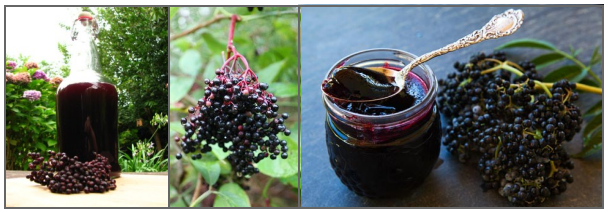
⇒ Fencing supplies

⇒ Storage cooler for berries

⇒ Equipment for transporting berries from field to cooler

⇒ Funds to print brochures for distributing information

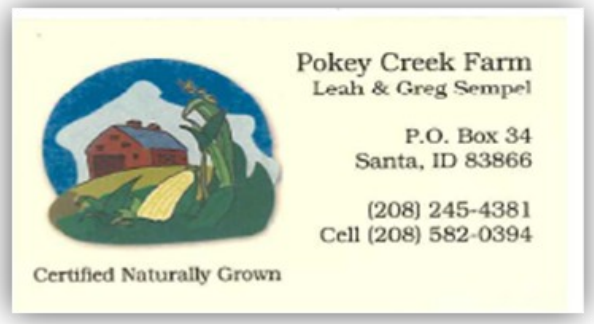
More information on WSARE Producer Grants at: www.westernsare.org



Future plans

By year three the cultivated elderberry plants should show the first measurable harvest. Production yields in their climate will be measured and harvesting techniques will be refined.

The Sempels are exploring value-added elderberry products for market demand, production feasibility and financial potential. The juice from the berries can be utilized to produce jellies, wine, or soda pop. Demand for dried berries is also being assessed. Recipes and processing recommendations for various value added products are being researched.



Pokey Creek Farm Elderberry Exploration

This project was funded by a Western Region SARE Producer Grant with assistance from University of Idaho Extension faculty.

WESTERN SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Meet the Farmers

Greg and Leah Sempel have been growing organic produce in the mountain terrain of northern Idaho for over thirty years. Through the years they have developed an exemplary model of how producers can utilize terrain once perceived unusable for growing vegetables and small fruits.

The Farm

Pokey Creek Farm, is situated on 24 acres of forested land, including two acres on a southern slope under intensive vegetable production.

Elderberries grow wild in the mountains of north Idaho and the Sempels have harvested the berries for many years to produce jelly and wine. The Sempels have always wanted to diversify their operation with a new product and elderberries were a good fit. Not only do they grow well in the local climate, but elderberries have potential health benefits.

The Project

The Sempels received a Western SARE producer grant in 2010 to explore the feasibility of elderberries as a value-added crop.

Initial research was conducted through personal visits with Danny Barney, former Professor of Horticulture with University of Idaho Extension, to discuss his research with the elderberry plant. He suggested potential cultivars and planting strategies he had developed through his work.

The cultivars selected were *Sambucus caerulea,* blue elderberry native to western states, and *Sambucus nigra,* black elderberry.

One acre field to be cleared for planting

The first priority was the site preparation of a one acre plot where the elderberries were cultivated. Trees were cleared, soil amendments added and fencing was built to protect elderberry plants. Soils were prepped by using already established practices of cover cropping, mulching, utilizing manure and other soil amendments. Six hundred total plants of 2 varieties, were planted on the one acre plot in early spring of 2011.

Building the fence around the berry field

Plant Establishment

Plant establishment has been difficult. About one third of seedlings didn't make it due to poor seedling quality and drought conditions. Remaining plants vary in size from 3 ft. to over 6 ft. Cuttings will be propagated from existing plants to fill in spaces.

Elderberries in the second year