

Northwest Holly Growers Association

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Interesting holly facts

-  The use of Holly as a symbolic winter decoration, with its shiny, prickly leaves and blood-red berries, goes back in history to the Celtic peoples of Northern Europe, who decorated their homes with it during the time of the winter solstice, or Yule.
-  The ancient Romans believed that holly warded off lightning strikes and witchcraft and sent boughs of holly to friends during the festival of Saturnalia, also celebrated at the winter solstice.
-  The early Christian Church retained many of the Celtic and Roman traditions to help celebrate the birth of Christ. The early Celtic Christians associated the prickly holly leaves with the crown of thorns from the crucifixion and the red berries with the blood of Christ.
-  In South America holly is used in making matte, a type of tea drink popular in Argentina. The wood of the holly tree is used in the manufacture of pianos to make black keys due to its solid grain-less appearance.
-  Holly extracts have been used in folk remedies for dizziness, hypertension, and even cancer for centuries. New studies from Ireland, as reported in the New Scientist (December 1998), found that extracts from the roots and bark of English holly contain chemicals that look promising for the treatment of skin cancers and for strengthening the immunological effects of vaccines.
-  There are about 400 species of holly. The only temperate or tropical regions naturally lacking holly are western North America and Australia. They are sometimes deciduous, but mostly evergreen trees and shrubs, with shoots often angled and alternating leaves. Both males and females have white flowers, but only females have berries. The red 'berries' are technically

white flowers, but only females have berries. The red berries are technically drupes containing two to eight seeds. The white wood is tough and usually grain-less.

 Evergreen hollies are very hardy attractive trees and shrubs that are ideal for temperate climates. European and Asiatic species are adaptable to most soils and temperate climates, while native North American species usually prefer a neutral or acid soil.

 The two principal types of holly grown by our members for Christmas decorations are English and Variegated Holly, both with the botanical name of *Ilex Aquifolium*, meaning needle-leaf.



English (green) Holly



Variegated Holly