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# *Interesting Facts About Holly*

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE BOY AND GIRL HOLLIES?**

Yes, Hollies are male and female. The berries may be considered similar to babies. Thus only the female Holly bears berries. The male Holly does not have berries. And a female Holly planted alone will not have berries unless there is a male Holly somewhere around. (The bees carry the male pollen to the female).

## **HOW OLD DO HOLLIES HAVE TO BE BEFORE THEY HAVE BERRIES?**

Most all Holly varieties berry steadily after they are five to eight years of age. Before that time baby Hollies will berry only when they feel like it. Fortunately, this is often enough so that most people are quite satisfied.

Why don't Hollies berry every year when they are small? Well, the answer seems to be tied in with the fact that during the "childhood" years Hollies grow more rapidly than they do after "maturing" at about eight years of age. Mother Nature apparently prefers that small Hollies "grow up" a few years before bothering them with too many berries.

## **HOW TO IDENTIFY THE SEX OF HOLLY**

Each variety is one sex only. Thus if the variety name is known, the sex is automatically identified.

Where variety names are lost or where seedlings or unnamed Hollies are owned, it is often desirable to identify sex. Folks who now own only one Holly may perhaps identify the sex, buy a mate, and the following year be blessed with a delightful berry crop.

The only positive way to determine the sex of Holly is to study the tiny whitish-petaled flowers in the springtime. The female flower has a hard green center that looks like a small green berry. The male flower has no solid center and is vaguely yellow with pollen dust.

## **IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE ONE MALE FOR EVERY FEMALE?**

One male tree will service perhaps ten female trees of equal size if all are planted near each other. Where some females are in one place and some in another, it would be well to plant a male with each group. It is never necessary to plant the male closer than sixteen feet to the female, but both should be on the same side of the house or yard. It is interesting to note that a male tree will pollenate a female tree twice or three times its size.

## **ARE AMERICAN HOLLIES HARDY? WILL THEY STAND COLD CLIMATES?**

Yes. We have spent forty odd years breeding and selecting hardy varieties of American Holly. Our Hollies are planted in open windswept fields and have survived temperatures to twenty below zero, winds of eighty miles per hour and innumerable sleet and snow storms. All the varieties listed in this booklet are winterhardy and are ideal for the colder climates of the great population centers of the Northeast and Midwest. Of course our Hollies will do well in warm-er places, too.

## **ARE HOLLIES EASY TO GROW? CAN THE AVERAGE PERSON GROW THEM?**

Hollies are very easy to grow . . . especially varieties such as the ones listed in this booklet. Rumors that Holly is hard to grow come mostly from people who have tried tender Southern or Western varieties. If you will follow the suggestions on the back cover, I am sure you will have no difficulty growing our hardy Hollies.

## HOLLY ORCHARDS

Holly orchards can be very profitable, as you may imagine from the price of cut Holly branches at Christmas time. However, this is not easy money. It is a long term investment. For an American Holly does not grow fast enough to both "grow up" and at the same time supply large quantities of cut branches. An orchard Holly should be at least sixteen to twenty years of age before any quantity of sprigs are cut from it each year.

The greatest opportunity for American Holly orchards lies with homeowners who have an acre or more of yard that they are not using. Spaced twenty feet apart each way, an acre of Hollies contains 109 trees, of which at least ten should be non-berry male pollenators. The original cost of 109 Hollies, if purchased as yearlings, will be similar to the cost of a purebred dog. The yearly cost of fertilizer, water, etc., will be about the same as dogfood for one large dog. Holly orchards need watering perhaps once a week during the summer. When grass is planted between the Hollies as a lawn, the area around each tree must be kept clear of weeds and grass. Fertilizer is put on once a year. Hollies have very few insect pests and the great majority of the people who plant Hollies never need to spray them at all. (We will be glad to advise anyone who believes they may need to spray).

Young parents who plant a Holly orchard can gain some income from the orchard during the children's high school years and likely could harvest from the orchard a large part of college expenses.

An interesting thought is that Holly orchards need almost no care during the winter. Thus folks who are planning to live on a retirement income say twenty years from now might well plant a Holly orchard with the thought that they would care for it in leisure during the warm weather months and could take the December harvest income to travel with each winter.

Businessmen have been known to plant Holly orchards outside their offices or factories. The Hollies add interest and beauty and the cut Holly branches can be given to employees and customers at Christmas time. Usually there is an employee with spare time who can care for the trees.

## HOLLY HEDGES

Have you ever seen a Holly hedge? It is surprising that more have not been planted. Granted that it would be rather costly to plant a full grown Holly hedge. But most anyone can afford to buy Hollies in the baby yearling size, line them out in garden rows for three or four years, then plant them into the permanent hedge location. Holly hedges provide beauty and also have many advantages that you may not have thought of. Holly has no thorns to break off and fester in the skin like barberry or firethorn . . . Hollies just make clean little scratches that heal quickly. Did you know that Holly hedges are sound deadening? Street sounds do not pass readily thru a Holly hedge. Birds like to nest in Holly hedges because the dense armour of the stickery leaves keeps cats and other animals out. Holly hedges provide winter bird food (berries) thus attract interesting birds to your yard. Holly hedges have the advantage of being "different" too . . . few people have them, tho easy to grow.

We generally plant our hedge trees two to four feet apart. It really does not matter, but the further apart you plant the longer it will take for the hedge to merge together.

Most Holly hedges are planted to all of one female variety. The males are then planted as specimen evergreens scattered thru the yard so as to be fairly near the hedge. One male is sufficient for roughly thirty feet of female hedge.

# Holly Varieties

(Ilex Opaca)

## **OLD HEAVY BERRY (female)**

One of the most outstanding of all the Hollies. Old Heavy Berry has thick, dark green leaves with a gloss or shine similar to English Holly. The berries are unusually showy and are a vivid "sun-catching" bright red. On a sunny winter day the lumps and clusters of red berries can be seen from far away. Old Heavy Berry is unusually steady berrying. Many of our medium sized specimens have not missed a year of berrying in ten years and always have about the same quantity of berries each year.

We like to plant Old Heavy Berry out where everyone can see it, and where it can be enjoyed by the woman of the house as she looks out her windows.

Old Heavy Berry branches and sprigs are of premium quality as cut Holly. A small orchard of Old Heavy Berry will supply the whole neighborhood with cut Holly branches at Christmas time.

## **BIG RED (female)**

An outstanding variety. The leaves are so very dark green that they might be called "black-green". The berries are a very intense sort of red. When you see a Big Red Holly, you immediately think that here is something out of the ordinary. The contrast between the green of the leaves and the red of the berries is unusual. We have several planted out in a field of average Hollies and they are so bright and pretty that people seem to always want to buy them. But as it is a relatively new variety, we must keep our larger Big Reds in order to provide enough cuttings to supply folks with the baby sizes.

Only Old Heavy Berry can lay a claim to equally bright colors. Old Heavy Berry leaves are not quite as deep a green, but are shinier than Big Red Leaves. Old Heavy Berry holds its berries out in clusters more. Side by side, you do not tend to prefer one over the other, but wish that you had one of each. Not available until Fall 1956.

## **CARDINAL (female) Improved**

Cardinal does not grow as large as most Hollies and may be kept indefinitely to a height of four feet or more by yearly pruning. Cardinal Hollies are often planted near patio or picture window, on either side of the front door, or in any prominent location where they will be looked at and enjoyed. Cardinal adapts easiest to a pyramidal shape but may be pruned to various rounded forms, thus can be used in landscape plans wherever upright yew (*taxus*) is specified. This is a welcome thought, for a Cardinal Holly in place of an ordinary evergreen can make your home look different from your neighbor's and can brighten your whole planting in winter.

Cardinal has medium sized, stickery green leaves and bright red berries very typically what most folks think of when they think of "Holly". Many people prefer to buy baby yearling Cardinal Hollies and plant them in garden rows for a few years before bringing them into the foundation planting of the home. (Large Cardinal Hollies are relatively expensive).

Cardinal is named for the red bird whose feathers are the color of Holly berries. For some reason, Cardinal red birds seem attracted to Holly and many homeowners see a red bird for the first time after planting Hollies in their yard.

### **CANARY (female) Yellow-berry (xanthocarpa)**

Why do people like yellow-berried Hollies? Well, for the same reason that people like yellow apples, I guess. They are just as good as red, and they are pretty. Yellow is a brighter color than red, and a vase of yellow berried Holly against knotty pine paneling is absolutely striking. And too, there is the element of surprise . . . the typical Holly leaves with the unaccustomed bright shining yellow berries.

Where to plant a yellow berried Holly? We prefer a partially shady location. Light shade brings out the color of the leaves and makes the yellow berries stand out. Heavy shade under large trees is of course, no good, for heavy shade will prevent berrying and big tree roots will smother the Holly roots. Large evergreen tree roots do not bother Hollies, thus yellow berried Hollies do well to the east of an evergreen (not under it) and are very nice when planted on the east side of the house or in a wild flower garden.

Canary yellow berry was named for the wild canaries whose feathers so much resemble the color of its berries.

### **REPANDENS (female) Spreading Holly**

Repandens variety Holly does not grow upright. Little yearling Repandens Hollies start to bend their single shoot by the end of the first year. Two year olds are often one-sided and should be pruned back some on the sides which extend out the most so as to allow the blank sides to "catch up". With this trimming most three year olds are circular little bushes of bent over or bending branches often quite flat and spreading in appearance. Much as one layer of cake is added to another Repandens may be made taller by successive yearly prunings on the edges to keep it from spreading.

Repandens has attractive medium green leaves and red berries. It rarely has many berries, however, and should be considered useful because of its unique habit of growth. Repandens may be planted in the yard in places that you would never dream of planting Holly in before. Like under a picture window or as a low foreground evergreen in front of a higher planting of evergreens or shrubbery. Very often there is a chance to use a pair of low spreading Repandens on either side of the front steps. Repandens are pleasing when planted in a circle around a doctor's signpost, or flagpole, etc.

### **CAPE COD (female) Improved**

This Holly has the largest berries of any that we know, the size being the result of double ovary berries which occur in the manner of double yolker eggs. Most years, the majority of the berries on the tree will be unusually large. However, there are always a scattering of normal and small berries on the tree, some years more than others. The leaves are a medium average green and the habit of growth is vigorous and bushy. We recommend this tree to anyone who has a number of Hollies and wishes another that is different and interesting.

### **MERRY CHRISTMAS (female) Improved**

Everyone seems to love the name of "Merry Christmas". With good green leaves and a very dependable berrying habit, our Merry Christmas Holly has endeared itself to the hearts of many. Not available until Fall 1957.

### **CHRISTMAS SPRAY**

An extremely rapid growing variety with big leaves of medium to dark green. Christmas spray has good sized red berries on longer than usual stems. On

the old parent tree the limbs are long and flat and layered. When you cut a branch, it is a perfect flat spray . . . with scattered lights of berries amongst large green leaves. Very awkward and "leggy" when small, it should be severely pruned each year to form a bushy framework. Not available until Fall 1956.

**OLD FAITHFUL (female)**

A rather slow growing variety with dark green leaves and a very dependable habit of berrying. The berries are slower to turn red than most but are a good bright red before Christmas. Unusual in the amount, steadiness and showiness of its berries and the better than average green of its leaves.

**PERFECTION (female)**

**CHRISTMAS CAROL (female)**

**ALLOWAY (female) Upright**

These three varieties all make unusually nice little trees by the time they are four or five years of age, thus endearing themselves to nurserymen who grow them to sell at early ages on the plant markets. All have exceptionally strong root systems. Perfection and Alloway have medium to dark green leaves, Christmas Carol a medium green tending to pastel. The berries of Christmas Carol are very red, profuse and lovely. Perfection berries are well distributed, average in quantity, and of a bright red. Alloway berries tend toward orange red, then red, and are of good average quantity and quality. Alloway is the most exceptional with regard to forming a pyramidal shape in the shortest length of time. Christmas Carol is also a strongly pyramidal developer. Perfection makes a broader rapidly formed bush. Not available until Fall 1956.

**HEDGEHOLLY (female) P. Bosley**

Small average green leaves and small bright red berries . . . very petite and delicate. This Holly has an admirable habit of carrying its leaves and berries in such a manner that wherever you cut it, it still tends to look attractive. Hedgeholly thus adapts very well to a formal sheared Holly hedge.

**MALE HOLLIES (Pollenator males)**

These are very necessary as you know, for female Hollies will not have berries unless a male is planted nearby. We have a number of male varieties. Each one is about as nice as the other and while the leaves of some are slightly different than others and some grow a little faster than others, there is not really enough difference among them to matter.

Thus please order merely "male" or "Pollenator male" in whatever quantity you wish and we will furnish good ones.

## **INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT BABY HOLLIES**

No matter how good the variety, baby Hollies often do not have dark green leaves. In summer the leaves are usually medium green. After frost in cold climates baby Hollies often discolor their leaves with touches of purple, yellow or yellow-brown. Why is this? Well, Hollies grow faster in "childhood" than they do after they are five to eight years of age. And they often grow on up into the frost . . . which discolors their leaves with tints of autumn color. Older Hollies stop growing before frost and harden off deep green leaves before winter.

Yearling Hollies will often grow more like a beanpole than a tree if left unpruned during the second and third years. The best method of pruning a yearling Holly is to "behead" it just before it starts its second year of growth. We usually cut off a third to a half of the total height of the little yearling. This causes it to start branching right away during the second year. Then we prune back the longer branches of the two year old just before it starts the third year of growth in the spring. This causes it to further branch out and become more or less bushy during the third year. After that, pruning is more a matter of "touch-up" and shaping the bush to the shadow outline or form that you personally prefer.

### **PRUNING:**

Hollies need pruning for about the same reason that we trim fingernails and hair. The tree will look neater if trimmed yearly. This fact is ideally adapted to the desire of most Holly owners to cut Christmas Holly from their trees. Pruning should be done in late fall, winter and early spring months. Limbs should be cut clean with pruners or saw. It is unwise to break limbs, for breaks cause large scars that sap the energy of the tree.

Do not be afraid to prune Hollies. Pruning improves the next year's appearance in most all cases. Hollies may be cut to the ground without serious injury for they will sprout again as a bushy tree. Loose, scraggly Hollies may be cut back severely and will sprout in many places the following year to become more dense and attractive in time. Hollies may be cut at any point upon the twig or limb, thus are indeed "easy to prune".

### **FERTILIZER**

Hollies require a slow, steady plantfood to nourish their evergreen leaves and their berries. Thus organic fertilizer is ideal, for with each watering the juices go down to feed the roots of the Holly. Chemical fertilizer dissolves rapidly and feeds quickly but not steadily, thus is not as suitable for Hollies as organic fertilizer.

We plant our Hollies in Oak Leafmold and use tobacco stem mulch each year, either in the autumn, winter, or early spring. Using the branch spread as a guide, a half inch to an inch of tobacco stem mulch is applied in the form of a blanket under the entire branch spread. The branch spread of the tree thus automatically determines the amount to use. It is wise to add a similar mulch of Oak Leafmold each year also, applied in the same manner as the tobacco stems.

### **WATER**

Hollies like to be watered with lots and lots of water every week or so thru the late spring, summer and early autumn. A good soaking is vital . . . a sprinkling does more harm than good. Hollies should freeze with their roots moist, therefore should be watered just before freezing weather.

## **WHERE TO PLANT YOUR HOLLY TREE**

Hollies can be grown in most any kind of well drained soil if Oak Leafmold is used around the roots when planting. Hollies prefer full sunlight and bear maximum berry crops in sunny places. Partial shade enhances the green of the leaves but may slightly decrease the number of berries. Heavy shade stops berrying and causes the tree to become straggly.

Hollies should not be planted within twenty feet of large trees, particularly maples, as big tree roots draw water and food away from the Holly.

In very cold climates, Hollies should be planted in "out of the wind" locations, for frozen Holly leaves are so stiff and stickery that they scratch and stab each other as they lash about in heavy winds.

## **HOW TO PLANT A HOLLY TREE**

The general idea is to surround the roots of the Holly with a crumbly, well rotted, organic mulch such as Oak Leafmold, for nothing seems to make a Holly happier than to be able to grow with its roots in leafmold.

Hollies should be planted with the top of the root ball or container at the level of the surrounding earth. Potted Hollies should have the pots removed before planting. Wire basketed Hollies may be planted basket and all. Balled and burlapped Hollies are planted with the burlap on. (Removal of the burlap may disturb the roots).

We often make a "ring" of soil around the hole to hold the water in. Hollies should be thoroughly soaked sloppy wet with water when planting to get all the air spaces out of the earth surrounding the Holly, as Holly roots will die if they grow out into air spaces in the soil.

## **HOLLIES HOLD THEIR BEAUTY A LONG TIME**

Did you ever stop to consider that spring flowers and autumn leaves are only at their very best for a few days? How wonderfully beautiful they are, but how short lived! Holly trees are among the prettiest things there are, and yet they retain their beauty for months. The berries turn red in November and remain on the trees until birds eat them in the spring.

## **DO YOU KNOW WHERE THERE ARE SOME UNUSUAL HOLLIES?**

One of the best Holly varieties was discovered in an obscure back yard. Another came from a row of seedling Hollies in a small country nursery. Several varieties have come from deep in the woods and never would have been discovered had farmers or mountaineers not written to us of Hollies they knew.

A new variety of Holly rarely means more than a few dollars to the discoverer, for it takes so many years to propagate, test and introduce.

However, many people love Holly and write to us about trees they know of because they realize that we too like Holly and will not take advantage of them or harm the trees that they write us about.

## **INVITATION**

Would you like to visit our Holly Farm? The berries are prettiest from November thru March and you are very welcome to drive out and look at the Hollies without obligation to buy. There are some fifteen acres of Hollies to look at, and various small greenhouses and beds of small Hollies that are intriguing. Someone is always here during daylight hours.

If there are any questions that you would like to write us about, we'll be glad to try to answer them if we can.

## **EARLE DILATUSH'S HOLLY FARM**

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