

American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)

The American Holly is sometimes also referred to as the White Holly, Prickly Holly, Evergreen Holly, Christmas Holly, or Yule Holly. It can grow from 25 ft. to as tall as 60 ft. in the warmer parts of its range. The American Holly has dark green, non-glossy, spine-tipped leaves and bright red berries occur on the female plants. A shorter, multi-trunked form may grow in lower-light situations. The bark is a light gray color.

The evergreen fruiting branches are popular Christmas decorations. Many improved varieties are grown for ornament, shade, and hedges. You must have both a male and female plant to have berries, or at least have the opposite sex growing wild somewhere nearby. The male must be the same holly species as the female and bloom at the same time. This is a very slow-growing tree. The whitish, fine-textured wood is especially suited for inlays in cabinetwork, handles, carvings, and rulers, and can be dyed various shades. Many kinds of songbirds, gamebirds, and mammals eat the bitter berries of this and other hollies, but the fruits are poisonous to humans.

Hollies are not typically used as street trees, they block lines of sight and they can prick those who pass by and also the workers tasked with maintaining them. They also grow very slowly and have many disease and pest problems.