

Holly can add some warmth to garden

The all-American garden: It's filled with a wide variety of trees, shrubs and flowering plants. And holly. That's right, the holly species isn't just for Christmas decorating. Evergreen shrubs and trees, such as holly, can add a special kind of warmth to a garden, especially during the winter months when other shrubs and trees are bare and look less inviting.

There are approximately 300 different varieties of holly or holly species, ranging from dwarf shrubs to 70-foot trees. Holly can grow in either temperate or tropical regions but will thrive best in acidic soil which is well drained.

As a shrub, holly can be planted as a showy centerpiece for garden landscapes since its berries and leaves last for over one season, frequently well into the winter.

Some species of holly can also be used as a hedge to define space in a landscape. In fact, because it is a slow growing evergreen shrub, holly is among one of the most preferred varieties for hedges. Slower-growing shrubs make for a denser hedge which requires less maintenance and pruning.

There are holly shrubs that attract birds because of their tasty berries and valuable nesting or hiding places. And, there are hollies that make good barriers, like Chinese holly, because of its thorny leaves, and hollies with beautiful, showy



Holly is one of the most sturdy evergreens and is perfect as a shrub or hedge.

fruits which last all year round, such as the common winter-berry and Chinese holly with their lavish and ornamental berries. And, of course, there is the English holly, which graces Christmas hearths and adds to the yuletide spirit.

Holly shrubs are easy to take care

of and leave the homeowner with a beautiful garden and enough spare time to enjoy it. The holly species are not finicky, are usually pest-resistant and can adapt to a wide variety of conditions.

Most hollies prosper best when planted in soil with a pH factor of

around 6.5. If you live in an area where the soil is alkaline or has poor drainage, add 50 percent peat moss to the soil to ensure a healthy, strong plant when planting your shrub or tree. And take heed not to lime the soil around your holly plants.

Although holly can grow in light ranging from full sun to shade, the berry production is greatest in good sunlight. Compared with other shrubs, though, holly varieties do much better in shade than most.

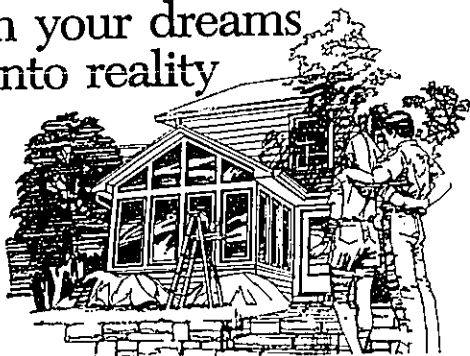
While you could almost leave the holly shrubs alone, they do benefit from a watering and feeding every two weeks. Holly plants should get enough water to wet the soil at least four inches into the ground.

Such products as evergreen and azalea food are good sources of nutrients and can be mixed right into water or insecticide, taking the nutrients right down to the roots where they are needed.

Because holly is an acid-loving plant, iron deficiency can be a common problem which is easily rectified with consistent fertilizing.

Because of its naturally compact and neat growth, holly species also do very well when grown in containers — a perfect way to enhance a front door stoop, patio or garage entrance. The Japanese and Chinese holly varieties do especially well in containers, due to their small, contained root system, and require the same simple care as holly shrubs.

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