

Holly

Ilex aquifolium

Plants · Evergreen tree · berries Nov–Feb



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A dense evergreen tree or shrub with glossy dark green leaves, spiny on the lower branches and often smooth-edged higher up, and — on female plants only — bright red berries through the winter. Holly grows in woodland understorey, hedgerow and gardens across the Dumfries area, and is one of the few evergreen broadleaves native to Britain.

BEHAVIOUR

The prickles are a response to browsing: leaves within reach of deer and sheep are heavily spined, while those above browsing height on the same tree are often smooth, a difference the plant can adjust within its own lifetime. Male and female flowers are on separate trees, so a berryless holly is simply male. The berries are toxic to us but a vital late-winter food for thrushes.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Hollies (Aquifoliaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 15 m
STATUS	Native; one of few native evergreen broadleaves

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