

# 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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