

# Holly *Ilex aquifolium*



Holly is the commonest native evergreen and can be seen in a variety of forms and habitats. It will flourish in a hedgerow or as an understorey tree in woodland. Holly can grow to a fine conical tree of 15 metres, growing more straggly with age. Leaves lower on the tree have sharp spines. Above a few metres leaves are less likely to be grazed by animals and have smoother edges.



Mature Holly leaves are dark, glossy green and easily recognised with their wavy margins and strongly spiny leaves. The leaves have a thick waxy surface which helps prevent water loss through evaporation in the winter, when trees may be unable to absorb water from frozen ground.

# Holly *Ilex aquifolium*

Individual Holly trees are either male or female. Small white flowers usually appear from mid-May on both male and female trees. To produce berries the female flowers need to be pollinated from a nearby male tree.



Female Holly tree flowers have four petals with a green ovary in the centre. There are four white anthers which are non-functional.

The male Holly tree flowers have four petals and four yellow anthers with pollen. The pollen is collected by bees and other insects and transported to female trees.

Male trees do not have berries.



Holly trees support a lot of wildlife. The caterpillars of the Holly Blue butterfly feed on the flowers.





# Holly *Ilex aquifolium*

## Interesting Facts:

A good crop of berries is a sign of a good summer past, rather than a hard winter to come. The berries are an important food source for birds.

Holly berries are also known as drupes.



Each berry usually contains four seeds.



Holly bark is smooth and thin with small brown 'warts'. Young trees have a green stem.



The berries are green in the summer, turning red by October.