

# 'The holly blushed...'

## And its berries have been red since



Holly has become important holiday decoration for as long as there has been a Christmas. In earlier times, children flocked to the woods to collect it, and vendors hawked it on city streets.



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Send our special holiday greeting. A festive arrangement of flowers and holly leaves in an exclusive FTD Season's Greeter® bowl. An featuring a Christmas candle. It's so beautiful, you'll want to send one to the one you love. Just call or visit us now. We have these special holiday pieces for you too.

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This season to deck the halls, but before you bring enough of holly you ought to know some of the history and superstition surrounding it. A tough, prickly-leaved, berry-bearing plant, according to the current issue of National Wildlife magazine. Since the days of the ancient Celtic magical powers have been ascribed to holly, the National Wildlife Federation is historically reported. And one legend holds that weather conditions at the time Christmas holly is brought in will determine who runs the household — the husband or the wife.

Holly's use as a decoration dates back to the Druids, a religious order that traveled in pre-Christian England and France. "These woody priests considered the plant eternally green leaves proof that the sun would not desert them," the magazine explains. The early Romans extended this tradition by hanging holly indoors during the feast of Saturnalia, a midwinter festival celebrating the return of longer days. Early Christian converts also adopted this ritual by designating Christmas Eve as "templum exornatum" — "templum are adorned." It was forbidden to bring any greens into the home before that night.

As Christianity spread, so did holly legends. In one tale, the plants said to have had white berries until the Nativity. When a visitor broke off a branch of a holly tree growing outside the Bethlehem stable and offered it to the Christ Child, the baby put his finger on the sharply pointed leaves. "Horribly embarrassed, the holly blushed and its berries have remained red ever since."

Another holly superstition was promoted by Pliny, the early Roman naturalist. He asserted that a wild animal could be subdued merely by throwing a stick of holly at it. "He also alleged," notes National Wildlife, "that holly flowers could make water freeze, and that if the tree was planted near a house, it would protect the inhabitants from bad weather, poison, and witchcraft."

Medieval English physicians thought holly berries could cure colic, but patients who followed their doctors' orders sometimes died from the violent vomiting the berries induced. Holly leaves, however, are harmless when roasted and brewed for tea. The brew was often drunk by South American Indians, who thought it gave them extra strength.

The subject of all these legends comes in more than 200 varieties, including some that lose their leaves

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Cascade ..... 65 oz. 1.99  
Ocean Spray Cranberry 48 oz. Cocktail Juice ..... 1.19  
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Sliced Mushrooms ..... 16 oz. 29¢  
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