

December 2021

Common holly, *Ilex aquifolium* L. from the Aquifoliaceae family (holly family).

The holly is an evergreen, upright, perennial plant that can grow both as a single-stemmed tree as well as a multi-stemmed shrub. The plant can grow up to 15 m tall as a tree and up to 5 m tall as a shrub.

The leaves are ovate, shiny dark green, thick and leathery. The upper end is somewhat pointed, the leaf edge is barbed. Cultivated forms can also have a white leaf margin. Small white flowers appear from May to June on the dioecious plant (male and female individuals). The umbellate inflorescences are located in the leaf axils. The pollinated female flowers then develop into bright red, spherical drupes 8-10mm in diameter.

In temperate climates the common holly grows up to 1800m altitude. Mild winters and not too dry summers suit it.

Ilex is a poisonous plant. The ingredients are triterpenes and saponins. All parts of the holly are slightly poisonous.

In the garden, the holly is a decorative ornamental plant. The twigs are often used as Christmas decorations. A semi-shady spot with fresh, nutrient-rich, acidic humus soil is suitable.

The common holly is the Tree of the Year 2021 in Germany.

The holly is more or less the substitute plant for the palm fronds that are blessed in Catholic churches on Palm Sunday. Symbolically, the rich green leaves embody hope, the red berries love and the whole plant a welcome protection from all evil in the dark season.

And so it is not surprising that Harry Potter's wand was also made of holly with a core of phoenix feather.

