

Holly

Habitat Hero



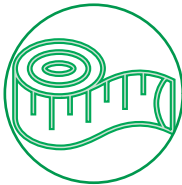
Common Name: Holly
Irish Name: Cuileann
Scientific Name: *Ilex aquifolium*



Seen in Ireland:

Flower: May – July

Fruit: November – January



Holly can reach heights of 20m tall, the spiky leaf is 6-8cm in length. The leaves at the top of the tree have less spikes, than those lower down.



This small **native** tree is widespread in woodlands and hedgerows throughout Ireland. It forms the shrub layer in some of our oldest woodlands.



Holly grows in dry, well-drained soils, sands and gravel, under both in most types of soil.
 •Photosynthesis is the process in which green plants use sunlight to make their own food.



Holly trees can live for up to 300 years.

Holly Life Cycle

By **Winter** these berries have turned bright red; and often show up on festive decorations in Ireland. The seeds (located in the berries) are spread by birds!

Holly is an evergreen tree, and so has green leaves all year round.

In **Autumn** green berries can be seen on the trees.

In **Spring**, with the increasing temperatures and sunlight, the plant grows new shoots.

Fertilisation happens when a flower on a female tree receives the pollen from a flower on a male tree. A fertilised flower will then turn into a berry.

Small white flowers blossom in **Summer** from May through to July.



Holly



Some more Facts:

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

- This is a well-known small tree.
- The evergreen, glossy leaves are spikey and stiff; the upper side is darker green than the lower side.
- It has small white flowers (6-10mm) from May to July.
- By August these have turned into green berries (just on the female trees).
- This is followed in late autumn by the familiar bright scarlet berries.
- The Holly leaves are a main food-plant (along with Ivy) of the Holly Blue Butterfly's caterpillars.
- The berries are a great source of food for many birds (e.g. The Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush) during winter.
- Holly trees are either male or female! – only the female has berries, but both sexes have flowers.
- It is therefore important to plant several Holly trees together to make sure that the female trees can be fertilised by the male pollen and go on to produce fruit.
- In European folklore, Holly trees were associated with protection from lightning, so people would plant them near to their homes!
- Druids believed the Holly tree to possess protective qualities, such as guarding against evil spirits and bad luck.
- Associated with Christmas, Holly is often used to decorate homes with wreaths and smaller sprigs.

