

Plant "Imagination"



American holly (*Ilex opaca*)-zone 3

Most often used for decorations along with the English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) – zone5.

Holly bushes in your yard can add structure and a splash of color in the winter and a lush, green backdrop for other flowers in the summer.

Care of holly bushes: Plant holly bushes in either the spring or fall because the relatively low temperatures combined with higher rainfall will make settling into the new location much less stressful for the holly bush.

The best location for planting holly bushes is in well-drained but not dry, slightly acidic soil in full sun. Most hollies are very tolerant of less than ideal locations and will grow well in part shade or dry or swampy soil.

If you are growing a holly bush for its **bright berries**, you need to keep in mind that most holly varieties have **male and female plants** and that only the female holly shrub produces berries. This means that in the location where you would like to plant a holly bush with berries, you will need to plant a female variety and you will also need to make sure that a male variety is planted nearby. Instead, you can also try to find holly varieties that do not need a male plant in order to produce holly berries.

Like other trees and shrubs make sure your newly planted holly bush is watered daily for the first week, twice a week for a month after that and, if planting in spring, once a week for the remainder of summer.

The care of holly bushes after they are established is easy. Fertilize your holly bushes once a year with a balanced fertilizer. They do not need to be watered in normal conditions, but if your area is experiencing a drought, you should give your holly bushes at least 2 inches of water per week.

When growing a holly bush, it also helps to mulch around the base of the holly shrub to help retain water in the summer and to even out the soil temperature in the winter.

Regular pruning your holly bushes will ensure that they keep a nice compact form.

If you find that your holly shrubs are being damaged in the winter by snow and wind, you can wrap the holly shrubs in burlap to protect them from the weather.

'LITTLE ONES'

It was a warm sunny day and it was wonderful being able to spend the entire day in the garden, but as the day waned so did my body as I began to tire from the long day. It was about then I heard the chirping of the little ones. Oh, the birds had been there all day along with squirrels and even a few wild turkeys not to mention the lone deer in the distance. But, this chirping was from Fernando and Tanaya as they came to say "Hi Neighbor!". Now Tanaya is about seven and Fernando is about five.

Tanaya wanted to know my name again as she told me she keeps forgetting. She thought that she should give me a different name so she could remember it more easily. It was decided that she would call me "Gardening Man". The questions came fast and furious. How do I know which ones are weeds? What's that one called? It took at least 45 minutes to answer all their questions. Tanaya was careful not to step on any plants and informed her little brother to be careful where he was walking. Mom must have taught them well. Tanaya decided that her favorite was the one that was not a Rose but smelled good and was just as pretty. She pointed it out to me and I told her that it was a Peony. Now Fernando asked me the name of every plant and so I asked him if he could read. He informed me that he could and so I pointed out that each plant in my garden had a plant label with its name on it. He pointed at a plant and told me that it was his favorite. Well what is its name I asked, and he told me it said "Holy Moose Ears" -- He was close as it was a small Hosta called Holy Mouse Ears.

I was tired when they arrived but the joy in their little faces brought me back to life and the full day in the garden was a day to remember. Tanaya and Fernando have moved and I only see them when they come to visit now. But, the thrill of their return is amplified with a shrill high volume "Hi Neighbor!" as they carefully explore the garden after leaving their bikes in the middle of the street. Tanaya still likes the one that is not a Rose and Fernando the Holy Mouse Ears.

By 'Gardening Man'