



WINTERBERRY HOLLY

A Wildlife Feast in the Frost

Environmental Message

December 2025

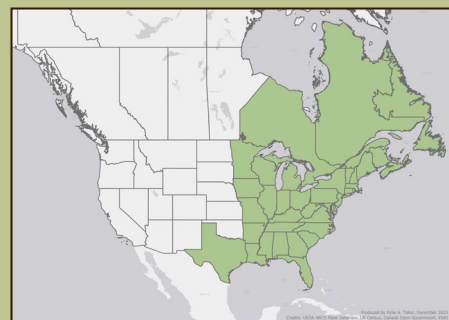
Did you know? Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) is a deciduous holly that puts on a stunning display in the colder months. Its vibrant red berries, which persist long after the leaves drop, make it an essential visual feature in winter landscapes. Interestingly, winterberry holly plants are dioecious, meaning male and female flowers grow on separate plants. Only female plants produce berries, but they need a nearby male plant to pollinate them and ensure fruit production.



Human and Wildlife Uses. Winterberry holly is often used in holiday decorations, adding natural color to wreaths and arrangements. The bright red berries also provide a vital food source for over 40 species of birds, including robins, cedar waxwings, and bluebirds, during the harsh winter months when other resources are scarce. Mammals like deer and rabbits browse its twigs and foliage, particularly in the winter. Historically, Indigenous peoples used parts of the plant for medicinal purposes, including treating fevers and colds.

Border Zone Compatible. Winterberry holly is compatible with integrated vegetation management practices in the border zone of electric utility rights-of-way (ROW) with an average height of 3–12 feet. It typically grows in moist, lowland areas, such as riparian zones, where it stabilizes soil and prevents erosion. Its moderate height and non-aggressive growth habit make it an excellent candidate for preservation in ROW as part of a biodiverse, pollinator-friendly vegetation strategy. Winterberry supports wildlife while not interfering with utility infrastructure.

Distribution Map



References/Works Cited

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