

Home/Garden



Christmas reading

Family Christmas celebrations are noisy. Pots and bowls bang in the kitchen while Mom and the aunts cook and set the table, Dad and the uncles stoke the fires, haul out the sleds and argue in corners over the latest political fiasco while the older cousins play their new tapes and the younger ones get caught in their snowsuits or race underfoot with clacking, buzzing toys.

It is a joyous symphony, but after the family crowds have dispersed, I have made it a practice to spend the day after Christmas with my new Christmas book. I like to continue celebrating the holiday in quiet solitude. One way that people have helped me spread this kind of pleasure out through the year is by giving me a magazine subscription as a gift.

Gardeners are not only active people, they are thoughtful and one of the gifts we find most valuable is information. A monthly magazine gives us an enjoyable dose on a regular basis. This year there is a beautiful new magazine, *Fine Gardening*, which is full of very practical information because it is written by its readers. This large, glossy magazine with colorful photographs and illustrations is actually published every two months and covers the gardening problems and possibilities of every garden zone in the country. They've discussed exotica like miniature orchids and lithops and old favorites like daylilies, daffodils and antique roses, and included advice on things like setting up a watering system and building garden paths. A subscription to *Fine Gardening* (Box 355, Newtown, CT 06470-9989) is \$20.

Organic Gardening (Emmaus, PA 18099-0035) has been around for a long time, but this year the magazine got a new look. Though it's bigger and glossier it continues to give gardeners sound advice on how to grow healthy vegetables, fruits and flowers without poisons. Concern about the environment and our own health has led many people to a new awareness of the damage that can be done to the soil and to the water in our area by pesticides and herbicides. *Organic Gardening* helps gardeners care for their health and the environment without giving up productivity or beauty. It focuses on vegetables and other food plants, never forgetting to give a few luscious recipes in each edition, but over the past few years it has branched out and now includes arti-

Pat Leuchtman

Between The Rows



cles on flowers and ornamentals. The September issue had an in-depth article on The New American Cottage Garden and in December an informative piece on growing super hardy hollies. A one year subscription to *Organic Gardening* is only \$13.97.

Horticulture Magazine (Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 51455, Boulder, CO 80321) is a beautiful monthly with gorgeous photography and articles that range from the very practical such as How to Handle Slugs and Secrets of Carrot Cultivation to profiles of historic gardens and gardeners and information on exotic ornamental grasses and unusual perennials. The prose is elegant, always clear and helpful. Not to mention inspiring. All this for \$20 for a one year subscription.

Gardening by Mail 2: A Source Book is not a magazine, but I must mention it here as a book that will be turned to countless times during the year by gardeners looking for a particular plant or tool. It's a complete directory that includes information about 750 nurseries and 300 seed companies, garden suppliers, horticultural societies, plant associations, gardening books and magazines. It's hard to believe that this fabulous 336 page book which is a marvel of cross-indexing was produced by a single energetic gardener, Barbara Barton, and published by her own press, Tusker Press. You can order a copy of this paperback from Tusker Press, P.O. Box 1338, Sebastopol, CA 95473 for \$18.50 including postage and handling. Allow four weeks for delivery. Quarterly updates are available for \$1.

Magazines are a way of inviting a host of experts into your home and garden to instruct, entertain, charm, delight, and fascinate. The knowledge and wisdom of garden writers can inspire and congratulate you when you are enjoying success and encouragement when you've suffered some horticultural failure. That's a good bargain for a couple of dollars a month.

Hollies for Franklin County

New varieties are hardy enough for region's weather

By KAREN IDOINE
UMass Cooperative Extension

Soon we'll be hearing or singing "Deck the hall with boughs of holly." Do you know that you can grow your own beautiful boughs of holly? Only in recent years have horticulturists produced varieties of hollies — the kind with shiny green leaves and red berries that we associate with Christmas — that are hardy in western Massachusetts.

The hollies that will do well here have been selected from a group called the Meserve hollies. Mrs. F. Leighton Meserve of St. James, N.Y., worked for years on crossing various species of *Ilex* (the genus name for holly). She aimed for beauty and hardiness. The American Horticultural Society awarded Mrs. Meserve their honor for outstanding contributions to amateur horticulture in honor of her breeding work with hollies.

Of all the Meserve hollies, a few from a group called the "Blue" hollies perform best in our climate. Landscapers and gardeners have been working with these plants for more than 10 years and several varieties have proven to be tolerant of our unpredictably severe and fluctuating winter conditions. "Blue Prince" and "Blue Princess" exhibit a lustrous bluish green foliage. They have a broad, shrubby form, and grow up to 15 feet high and 10 feet wide. Other hardy hybrids produced by Mrs. Meserve carry the name "China Boy" and "China Girl." These grow quickly, with a more compact habit than the blue hollies.

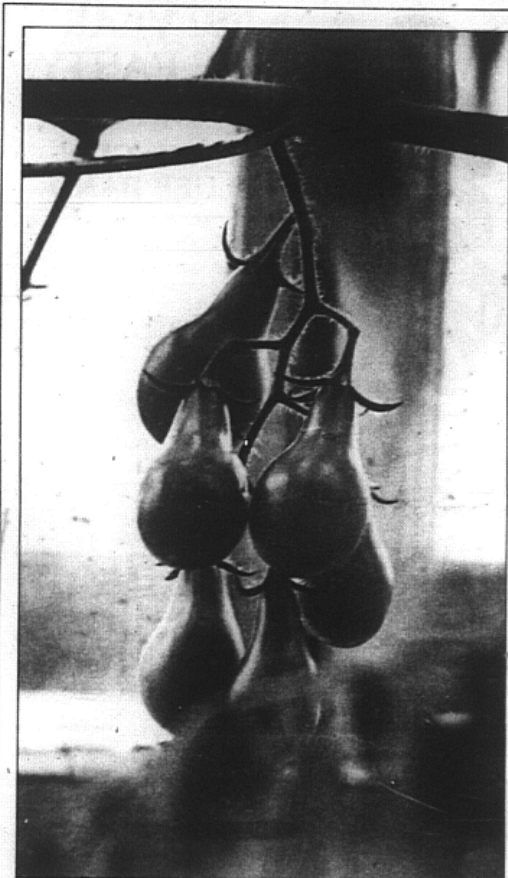
Although these handsome shrubs have been bred for their hardiness, they must receive proper care to flourish. For success in growing hollies, keep the following points in mind. Buy sturdy, healthy nursery-grown plants of named varieties. Local nurseries do carry the holly varieties described here. Plant them early in

the spring in a well-drained site, in carefully prepared holes. Hollies prefer a sunny location, but should be sheltered from biting winds. They tolerate some shade. Planting on a northeastern, or eastern exposure will help to minimize winter scorch. Maintain a 3- to 4-inch mulch around these shallow-rooted plants.

Remember, too, that these types of hollies are dioecious, which means plants bear either male or female flowers. For the female plants to produce berries, her flowers must receive pollen from a male plant. When you buy hollies, be sure to get one male and plant it within a hundred feet of the females. The male holly will provide pollen only; it won't fruit. Expect the female plants to have berries when they grow 3- to 5-feet high. This may take a few years, but in the meantime you will enjoy the winter show of glossy, green foliage.

Hollies will grow in various kinds of soils, but do best in neutral to slightly acid, well-drained loam that is fairly light and sandy. Be sure to keep them watered well after planting and during dry spells in the summer. As with all broad-leaved evergreens, a thorough soaking before the ground freezes in the fall will help to provide moisture for the plant during the winter.

If you can hardly wait for spring to plant your hollies for enjoyment next winter, why not explore for *Ilex verticillata*, common winterberry, now? By this time the leaves have fallen from this deciduous native species, but the bright red berries are in their glory until after Christmas. You can find this plant along roadsides or near marshy areas. It likes moist, acid soils. You can also find winterberry in nurseries in the spring and might want to consider it as an addition to your shrubby border, or to place at the edge of a field. The berries make bright decorations and birds love them, too!



Recorder/Chuck Blake

Tomato lover

A gardener in Bergardston transplanted these plum tomatoes from

Garden Calendar

This information is provided by Karen Idoine of the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service.

- Now is the time to:
- Prolong the freshness of cut holly greens by cutting in the late afternoon with a sharp knife and leaving in a bucket of water overnight. Make your arrangement the next day. Holly arrangements will stay fresh longer if kept in a cool place or in water.
 - Examine the roots of houseplants occasionally by taking the root ball out of the pot to see if its time to repot.
 - include flowers, potted plants, bulbs and a garden calendar on your Christmas lists.
 - look for berried shrubs that would make colorful additions to your landscape. Many will provide winter food for wildlife.
 - Prune selectively when cutting greens for Christmas decorations. Cut branches back to a shoot or node with sharp pruning shears. Stand back to look at the tree or shrub and then trim to maintain a balanced shape. Pine, fir, juniper, yew and arbutus make attractive arrangements. Avoid hemlock and spruce

which drop their needles quickly doors.

- send for 1989 seed and nur catalog so you'll have them dream over after the holiday when
- keep the Christmas tree trerated daily.
- pot up some amaryllis b now for a dramatic spring display
- think of ways to recycle c and paper at holiday time. Use f greens, instead of plastic and p for decoration. They can be recy as mulch later. Our natural enviro ment will benefit.
- Remember, poinsettias are poisonous. When you bring t home, place them in a sunny sp about 65 to 72 degrees F. Keep evenly moist and avoid chilling.
- store your Christmas tree side until you plant to decorat. Cut off about an inch of the bu the tree before you position it. will help it take up water and fresh longer.
- use room temperature w when you water your houseplants
- look for gifts for your frie and relatives who have g thumbs. Pruning tools, hand too garden apron or gift certific from a garden center will be s please.



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HERE'S the ANSWER

By ANDY LANG