

## What do they look like?

Up to 25m tall, normally less. The shape of young trees is tall and conical but they soon grow more unevenly.

If a bush has berries - it's female.

Smooth grey bark.

Very distinctive, thick, shiny, dark green leaves with wavy lobes that end in a sharp spike, especially on the lower branches.

Berries turn red from September onwards.

The number of berries depends on how many insects were around when the flowers came out.

The small, white flowers on male and female hollies are quite hard to see.

They come out in May - sometimes later.

Insects carry the pollen from four tiny yellow stalks (stamens) in the male flower to the central part (style) of the female flower.



# Tree of the Month

## Holly

### December



## Uses ...

- Holly is one of the whitest woods known. It is dense and fine-grained - well suited for making broom handles, turned objects, chess pieces and for ornamental and decorative purposes.
- The wood burns hot and so is popular for open fires.
- Holly was important in deer parks and old hunting estates as it was useful as winter food for wildlife and domestic cattle.
- Its greatest current use is to decorate homes at Christmas time in wreaths and around the house where the colours of the berries contrast so well with the glossy green of the leaves. (It is important to leave some for the birds though.)

## Folklore ...

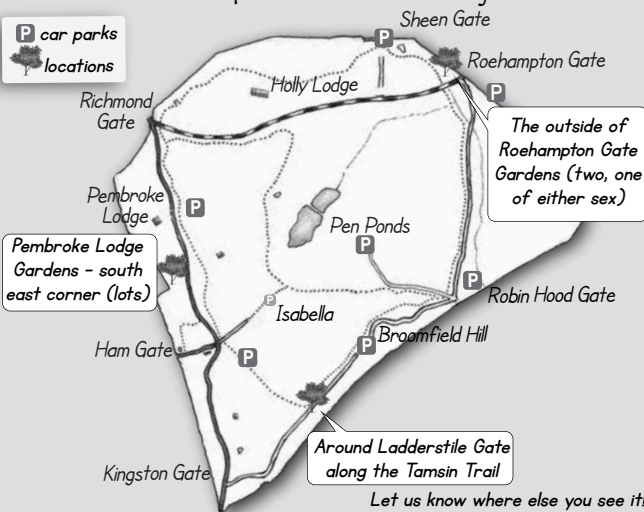
In the past it was thought to be unlucky to cut down a holly tree, partly because it kept evil witches and goblins away\*, perhaps to improve the chances of welcoming a new baby into the family.

Holly also had medicinal uses to cure whooping cough and to help with rheumatism.

## Where to find holly ...

Some of the best places to look for holly in the Park.

**P** car parks  
locations



Let us know where else you see it!

Holly is a native British tree, common in southern England.

It is quite easy to recognise with its spiky evergreen leaves and red berries in the winter.

It often grows in hedgerows and underneath oak and beech trees in woods.

Holly is a dioecious tree (*dye-ee-shuss*) that is either male or female. Other dioecious trees include willow, poplar and yew.

In the Harry Potter novels, Harry's wand was made of holly\*, around a phoenix feather core.



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## Holly and wildlife ...

Bees and other pollinating insects like to collect nectar from holly flowers. Hollies also provide good cover for nesting birds.

Although poisonous to humans, holly berries are loved by thrushes, pigeons and other birds throughout the winter and can strip them all off the tree.

Holly buds provide valuable food for the larvae of the holly blue butterfly, which fly in the Park from April to August.

The caterpillars of several moths eat holly leaves including holly tortrix and the double-striped pug.

\* Maybe holly can tell good witches from bad?