Winterberry

Ilex verticillata



Winterberry fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 8 feet

Spread: 8 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3b

Other Names: Black Alder

Description:

A deciduous holly valued for its extremely colorful red berries which last throughout winter on female plants; upright growth habit, suckers into colonies; requires moist to wet highly acidic soils, good for problem areas, needs a male pollinator nearby

Ornamental Features

Winterberry is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. It features an abundance of magnificent red berries from mid fall to late winter. It has dark green deciduous foliage. The pointy leaves do not develop any appreciable fall color.



Winterberry
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Winterberry is a dense multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with a shapely oval form. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering

Winterberry is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens



Winterberry in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Winterberry will grow to be about 8 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 8 feet. It tends to be a little leggy, with a typical clearance of 2 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in moist to wet soil, and will even tolerate some standing water. It is very fussy about its soil conditions and must have rich, acidic soils to ensure success, and is subject to chlorosis (yellowing) of the foliage in alkaline soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is native to parts of North America.