

# winterberry



*ILEX VERTICILLATA*  
WINTERBERRY

## BOTANICAL NAME

*Ilex verticillata*  
(EYE-leks ver-ti-si-LAH-tuh)

## COMMON NAME

Winterberry

## DESCRIPTION

Winterberries are popular for their reddish-orange to red berries that are clustered along multiple branches of slender stems.

## VASE LIFE

Winterberries can last 10 days or longer with the proper care.

## AVAILABILITY

Winterberries are available from fall through winter.

## notable varieties

- 'Winter Red' - This popular form is widely accepted as one of the best winterberries. The bright red fruit comes in profuse quantities.
- 'Afterglow' - Large red-orange berries mature to orange.
- 'Cacapon' - This heavy-fruiting variety has true red fruit. The leaves are textured, dark green and glossy.
- 'Red Sprite' - A popular, award-winning form, this dwarf female clone matures at only 3 to 4 feet tall. Early blooms produce numerous, large red fruit.
- 'Shaver' - An early-flowering form, this plant produces red-orange fruit.
- 'Stoplight' (also known as 'Hopperton') - This is a newer selection with large, deep red fruit.
- 'Winter Gold' - This variety features unusual pinkish or golden-orange fruit.

## design tips

Winterberries have many design uses. They add a beautiful touch to holiday arrangements, and their branches work well for colorful winter wreaths.



Photo courtesy of The Sun Valley Group

*I. VERTICILLATA*  
WINTERBERRY



*I. VERTICILLATA*  
'OOSTERWIJK'  
WINTERBERRY

Photo courtesy of the Flower Council of Holland

## processing

Winterberries are packaged like cut flowers in five- or 10-stem bunches. The leaves usually are not present. Cut the stems at least 1 inch from the bottom, dip or place the stems into a hydrating solution, and then place the stems into clean containers with properly prepared flower-food solution made with room-temperature water.

## vase-life extenders

**REFRIGERATION** Winterberries should be stored in floral coolers with the temperature set at 36 F to 38 F. Lower temperatures of 32 F to 34 F can be used if the winterberries are to be kept for more than three days. Keep humidity levels high.

**WATER** Check water and humidity levels daily. Recut the stems and change the flower-food solution every other day.

**HEAT SOURCES** Keep the berries away from direct sun and any other heat sources.

**TAKE CARE** Rough handling causes berries to drop.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Some cultivars are sensitive to the gas, which can cause berry drop. Check with your supplier to make sure your winterberries have been treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the grower level or during transportation.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The genus name "*Ilex*" is from the Latin "*Quercus ilex*," or "the holly oak." "*Verticillata*" is Latin for "alternating," referring to the arrangement of whorls of fruit around winterberries' stems.

**FAMILY** Winterberries are members of the *Aquifoliaceae* family, which is almost entirely composed of the *Ilex* genus, commonly known as the hollies. The *Ilex* genus has about 400 species. Relatives include *Ilex aquifolium* (English holly), *Ilex opaca* (American holly), *Ilex montana* (mountain holly) and *Ilex decidua* (deciduous holly or Georgia holly).

**DECIDUOUS** Winterberry is one of the few deciduous members of the *Ilex* genus; most are evergreen trees and shrubs. Winterberry leaves drop off in late fall to expose the plant's colorful berries.

**ORIGINS** The *Ilex* genus is native to North and South America and Asia.

**CAUTION** Although winterberry fruit is a food source for many animals, it can be toxic to people.

## quality checklist

**BERRIES** Avoid winterberries that show signs of mold or rot. *sfr*

Some information provided by:  
 The Chain of Life Network®, [www.chainoflifeflowernetwork.org](http://www.chainoflifeflowernetwork.org)  
 The Holly Society of America, Inc., [www.hollysocam.org](http://www.hollysocam.org)  
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