

**UNDER
the
GREENWOOD
TREE**
by SYLVAN HORTUS



HOLLY AND MISTLETOE

Christmas is a Christian Holiday! At least, modern civilization regards it as such. Yet, some of our Christmas customs have their roots in Pagan cultures. Two of the widely used plant materials of Christmas are examples.

The oldest fables of the Mistletoe come from Norse mythology. It occurs in Druid rites also, but it could be they absorbed it from the Norsemen who raided English shores and set up colonies there. The parasitic family of plants known as mistletoes are prevalent the world over.

Each host tree species has its own species of mistletoe to infest it. There are a number of genera in the family and some of these have hundreds of species. Only a very few are showy species. Two of these are the ones used for Christmas greens.

Biscum album, the Mistletoe used in Europe, and Pharadendron flavescens, the Mistletoe used in America, are very similar. Both have rounded thick leaves with a texture of Scotch grain leather. These leaves are yellowish green, and the white berries are sticky.

Birds are the agency for dissemination of the Mistletoe. Nature had a purpose when she made the berries sticky. Birds eat the berries and in the process get some of the sticky material stuck on their beaks. They rub this off on crevices in the bark of the trees, inadvertently leaving a few of the tiny seeds sticking there also. Here the seed germinates, sending a rootlet into the cambium of the tree, which feeds on the sap of the tree. The visible growth is postponed at first as the plant becomes an absorbing pad of root material lodged in the host's cambium.

Eventually twigs and leaves grow out of this pad until you have a shrub growing from the side of the branch. As the birds mainly use the high branches of the trees, most mistletoe is found growing high up in the host trees.

Much commoner, but not usually known, is the dwarf mistletoes habits. These species are much commoner, but the external or visible part of the mistletoe is so minute, it is not noticed. On coniferous trees, the results of dwarf mistletoe infestation is noticeable. The host trees may form dense clusters of adventitious buds which develop into heavy bunches of dwarfed twigs. It is from these witches brooms on some species that some of our dwarf horticultural forms have arisen. In the Strawberry range, south of John Day, more of the native



Christmas Blessings

Douglas Firs there have witches brooms as a result of dwarf mistletoe than do not. But, to get back to the Christmas Mistletoe, the kissing feature of it comes from Norse mythology. The life of Balder, god of the sun, had been threatened. His mother had extracted promises from everything on earth that nothing would harm Balder. She overlooked the Mistletoe. All the gods had great fun throwing things at Balder because they knew nothing could harm him.

That scheming mind of the Puck of the Norse gods, a devilish creature called Loki, had been underestimated. He knew the Mistletoe had not been contacted. He made a spear of the Mistletoe wood and persuaded a blind man to throw it into Balder.

The death of Balder caused great sorrow, for without him there was no sun, no warmth, no summer. Even the Mistletoe, unwitting accomplice to the deed, wept. Her tears took the form of the white sticky berries. So impressed was the god of the nether regions that he released Balder. Once more there was sun and warmth and summer. Balder's mother, overjoyed, kissed everyone. The Mistletoe hanging overhead also rejoiced. Thus the custom arose to kiss under the approving gaze of Mistletoe at all great festivals.

Holly was originally used in the home by the Druids. It was thought to have magical powers to ward off evil spirits and witches with their spells. To a Druid, every tree and bush had a spirit of some sort, and many of them were evil, so the powers of Holly were important to ones well being.

The Romans, great borrowers in all matters of their religion, borrowed the Holly myth when they invaded England, and took it back to Rome, from where it spread over Europe. It is just conjecture, but it is probable it carried over into the Christian celebration of Christmas because of ripening of the berries and the harvest of the Holly boughs came just prior to the Christmas season.

When the North American continent was settled, people found another species of Holly with leaves and berries similar to the old world kind. For two centuries the American Holly, Ilex opaca, was the commercial holly of this country.

It was not until the successful cultivation of the English Holly, Ilex Aquifolia, became a commercial operation in the Pacific Northwest, that this old world holly began to supplant the American species. Now, the English Holly dominates the Christmas trade. In the Eastern United States, the market is still shared with the American. The American is more slender and graceful in the longer sprays. The bark is a soft grey. The berries are spaced out over a greater part of the branches and each is held away from the branch by its own stem. It never has the crowded bunches of berries as the English does.

Many cultivated forms of the American Holly are grown in the Southeast, just as many cultivated forms of the English Holly are grown in the Northwest. Both seem sure to be successful commercial crops



Mistletoe



for time to come.

This Christmas, ward the evil Long from your house with Holly and rejoice under the Mistletoe driving in the accident and

Man sentenced

Ellis F. Long, 45, Gresham was sentenced to two years in prison Wednesday for negligent homicide after a probation revocation hearing before Circuit Court Judge Phillip Roth.

Long was convicted in July, 1970, of negligent homicide in the death of Robert J. Conway of Portland. Conway was killed in March, 1969, when the car in which he was a passenger was struck by an auto driven by Long. Long was convicted of drunk and

placed on five years probation with conditions that he spend one year in jail, that he not drive an auto until he could obtain a license and that he attend an alcoholic rehabilitation program.

Long was convicted of being drunk on the street four times during 1971 and 1972. He was also convicted of drunk driving in April 1972.

Judge Roth also found that Long violated terms of his probation by not attending an alcohol rehabilitation program.

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 Del Monte BONELESS HAM lb. \$1.29	 Morrell CANNED HAM 4 lb. Tin \$6.49 TIN	 BUTT HAM LB. 69¢
 RIB STEAK lb. \$1.39	 RESER'S STUFFING MIX 2 1/2 lbs. ea. 89¢	 Whole Shank Ham LB. 73¢
 RIB ROAST Small End lb. \$1.29	 Pillsbury or Ballard BISCUITS 8 oz. 8 for 99¢	 HAM SLICES LB. \$1.19
 Smoked Edams 8 oz.	 Pillsbury or Ballard BISCUITS 8 oz. 8 for 99¢	 Sigman Bacon 79 LB. 79¢
 Goodas 8 oz.	 Pillsbury or Ballard BISCUITS 8 oz. 8 for 99¢	 FRESH OYSTERS 89¢ A Jar
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