

Christmas Berries



By Bob Bolt

Much of the pleasure of the Christmas season is derived from the "gathering of the green", cutting the tree, and filling the house with the traditional Christmas colors and decorations.

Mistletoe, holly, pine, balsam and spruce are the most common materials used, but there are large numbers of other materials that can be used to great advantage. Berries of all sorts abound in this area and many of these can be used to supplement, but not replace, the traditional holly.

In addition to the well-known American holly, there are several other native hollies that can be used with evergreens. The most common of these



is the Winter berry (*Ilex verticillata*) or black-alder as it is sometimes called. This holly loses its leaves and the remaining berries resemble crimson beads.

The winged Euonymus makes an interesting decorative material, with its red fruit and cork "wings". The Strawberry bush, another Euonymus, is sometimes used but generally the pods and seeds have dropped before the Christmas season arrives. Both the American and Oriental Bittersweet are popular materials for decorations, having large clusters of orange-red berries growing on vines giving it usefulness as a hanging material.

For something different, the Snowberry can be used. The white fruit make quite a show. And, going well with this is the Virginia juniper, or common Red cedar with its silver-blue berries and