

PLANT ASSIGNMENT
BIOL 1030 002

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Pick one plant species (tree/ shrub or herb) that occurs in Alabama, and fill out the following details with respect to this plant.

Common Name: American Holly

Taxonomy

Scientific Name (italicize): *Ilex opaca*

Family, Order, or Kingdom: Family Aquifoliaceae, Order Celastrales, Kingdom Plantae

Gymnosperm or Angiosperm: Angiosperm

Description of plant (50-75 words):

Eg: They grow to a height of 15 to 30 feet and occasionally upto 50 feet. Hollies can live for 100 years or more.

Description of flower and fruit (50-75 words):

Eg: The flowers are small and greenish white, and occur in late spring. There are 4 sepals. The petals (corolla whorl) is white, with four petal-like lobes.

The holly is dioecious (with separate male and female plants); and only female plants produce the red fruits.

The fruit is small red drupe 6–12 mm diameter containing four seeds.

Functioning of the plant. State any detail of the functioning of the plant- you could choose to talk about its pollinators, its mode of dispersal of the seed, whether its parasitic, or just explain the movement of water up a trunk or the functioning of xylem or phloem.

Eg: The flowers are pollinated by insects, including bees, wasps, ants and night-flying moths.

Distribution of the plant – Where is it found ?

Eg: It is native to the southeastern United States, from coastal Massachusetts south to central Florida, and west to southeastern Missouri and eastern Texas.

What kind of habitat is it found in ? (a certain kind of forest, or a bog, or marsh etc)

Eg: It is an understory component of a number of forest cover types. The American holly is found in pine ecosystems and its range corresponds roughly to the combined ranges for loblolly and shortleaf pines.

Ecology of the species and its use to humans

Eg: The species typically grows as an understory tree in forests. It is rare in the north of its range in New England and New York, and always small there. It is abundant further south on the southern coast and in the Gulf states, reaching its greatest size on the bottomlands of southern Arkansas and eastern Texas.

Flowering begins in April in the southern part of the range of American holly, and in June at the northern limits.

The berries are reputedly poisonous to humans, but are important survival food for birds, who will eat the berries after other food sources are exhausted. Songbirds including thrushes, mockingbirds, catbirds, bluebirds and thrashers feed on the berries. American holly trees are a major food source for winter-migrating flocks of small

birds such as the cedar waxwing and American goldfinch, and stands of hollies are an important fast food stop in their migrations.

The American holly has played an important role in the culture of the United States. Before European settlers arrived in North America, native Americans boiled American holly twigs with pine tops to produce a tea that cured coughs. Today evergreen leaves and red berries are synonymous with Christmas.

Citations/ Sources:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilex_opaca, accessed on 7th March 2008.
2. <http://www.americanforests.org/productsandpubs/magazine/archives/2002winter/inprofile.php>