

Decorate with holly

LANCASTER — "Decking the halls with boughs of holly" is a custom several thousand years old. The ancient Romans, Greeks, and the Druids used holly in decorating their homes.

According to James J. McKeehen, Delaware County Extension agricultural agent, the Druids of pre-Roman Britain believed that the holly was a sacred tree and that the sun never deserted it. Holly growing in a deciduous forest and remaining green all winter was most conspicuous and indeed, somewhat miraculous.

It was a custom to decorate the interiors of dwellings with evergreens in which the woodland spirits could take refuge from the rigors of winter.

During Roman times, wreaths of

holly were sent to newlyweds as tokens of good will. Beginning December 17 holly also was used during the festival of Saturn, the Roman God of sowing and husbandry.

Today, we decorate our homes with holly during the Christmas season. In fact many historians believe that the word holly is a corruption of the word holy — some English writers of the mid-1500's called the plant "holy tree."

Writings from 1598 reveal that homes, parish churches, street corners and marketplaces in London were decorated with holly during the Christmas season. Along the countryside even the stables and beehives were decorated with a sprig of holly.

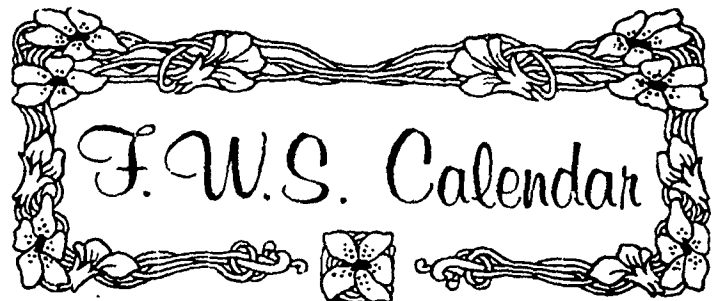
Decorating with holly during midwinter also was a custom of the

Chinese who used their native holly for decorating temple courts and large halls during their New Year's festivals in February.

The American Indians also made use of holly for decorations. In areas where American holly was native, the berries were dried and used for decorations on clothing.

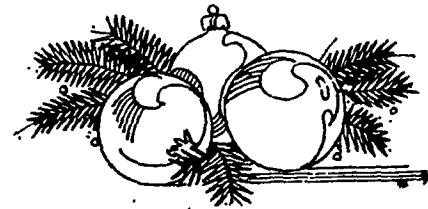
Unfortunately, in the past, many hollies were destroyed by plunderers cutting wild holly with little concern for the owner of the tree. In recent years, holly orchards have been developed in the Pacific Northwest where English holly will grow. Other holly orchards have been developed in the Southeast where American holly or other hollies can be grown.

Some of the better managed orchards are reported to yield up to 3,000 pounds of holly cuttings per acre for sale to the Christmas trade.



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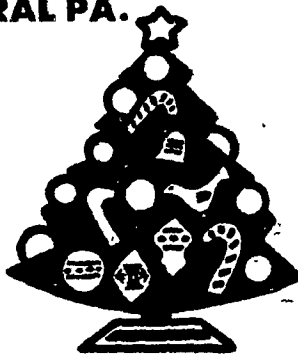
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LOOK OUT TROY HERE WE COME!

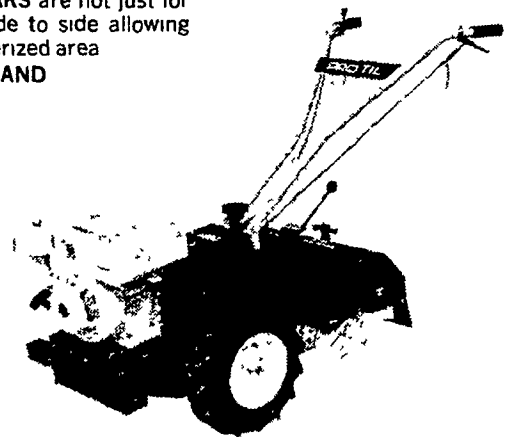
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