

November 20, 1944

Birds do eat holly berries in the fall, and they have a decided preference for the berries of one variety over those of another - another point to be considered in the selection of holly. I have a small holly tree near the house, which nearly every year bears a good crop of berries, and the birds almost always strip it before Christmas. This matter was discussed at the meeting at Judge Brown's, and Mr. Nearing had us taste the berries of different trees. Nearing said the berries were an emetic, but did not have such effect if merely tasted and were then spit out. The berries of the tree that Judge Brown said were always stripped early in the season Mr. Nearing called sweet. So they were, but with an unpleasant after-taste. The presumption is that the birds prefer the sweeter berries and eat them first. This is something on which holly enthusiasts can begin observations. However, I think it will be well to find something to dispel the disagreeable after-taste of even the sweet berries.

Elizabeth C. White

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I am so glad to get your notes on the eating of holly berries by birds. On the strength of them, I tasted a berry from a tree which the birds had nearly stripped. I do not admire their taste, for I had to return to the house to get a peppermint to take away the unpleasant after-taste. I am not sure that the birds do eat the fruit of this particular tree, for I have watched it and have never seen a bird near it. On the other hand, there are many field mice and it might be that they take the fruit for the seeds only; or it may be chipmunks. Another reason for my thinking so is that the fruit disappears from the center of the tree and that on the outer branches never seems to go entirely.

I recall that trees of "St. Mary" and "St. Ann" always hold their berries through the season. Apparently, if the theory is correct, these berries were not acceptable