

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

A berry, merry Christmas ... mostly for the birds



Holly is one of the most well-known holiday berries used in wreaths.

By Cynthia Brian

*"To me, the garden is a doorway to other worlds; one of them, of course, is the world of birds. The garden is their dinner table, bursting with bugs and worms and succulent berries."~ Anne Raver
Birdy, it's cold outside.*

Deciduous trees are barren of leaves, autumn perennials have finished their blooming cycle, and few flowers adorn the landscape. The glistening ornaments that embellish the foliage are a gastro delight for birds.



Cotoneaster berries provide a winter bird buffet.

Winter has arrived and with it the beautiful berries that are a vital source of food for birds as well as a traditional embellishment to Christmas wreaths and garlands. When we think of berries, we normally conjure images of blackberries, blueberries, raspberries or strawberries, all grown and harvested in the warmer months. Winter berries are different, and although they are a small fleshy fruit, they are mostly enjoyed by wildlife, with a few edible exceptions eaten by humans.

My garden boasts a plethora of winter berries that encourage my feathered friends to hang around for the holidays. Finches, mockingbirds,



Nandina, also known as heavenly bamboo, is poisonous and deadly to all wildlife and domestic animals.

Photos Cynthia Brian

robins, sparrows, jays, quail, doves, bluebirds, and orioles are attracted to the many varieties of berries that will provide their nutrition during a cold and stark winter. A few of my favorites include pyracantha, cotoneaster, viburnum, pepper, Chinese pistache, rosehips, holly, yew and barberry. Of these, only the pepper berries and rosehips are consumed by my family. Although pomegranates are not a berry, their jewel-red seeds called arils remind me of tiny berries and I grow them in my garden.

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