Japanese Winterberry

Ilex serrata



Japanese Winterberry
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 8 feet

Spread: 8 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Finetooth Holly

Description:

A deciduous holly that spreads and suckers to form colonies; dull red berries are very attractive in late autumn once the leaves have fallen; requires moist to wet highly acidic soils, good for problem areas, ideal for naturalizing a space



Japanese Winterberry foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Japanese Winterberry is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. It features an abundance of magnificent brick red berries from mid summer to late winter. It has dark green deciduous foliage which emerges purple in spring. The pointy leaves do not develop any appreciable fall color.

Landscape Attributes

Japanese Winterberry is a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering

Japanese Winterberry is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Japanese Winterberry will grow to be about 8 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 8 feet. It tends to be a little leggy, with a typical clearance of 2 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in moist to wet soil, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is very fussy about its soil conditions and must have rich, acidic soils to ensure success, and is subject to chlorosis (yellowing) of the foliage in alkaline soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America.