



A giant redwood isn't the sort of tree
you can get in your back garden

Winter wonderland

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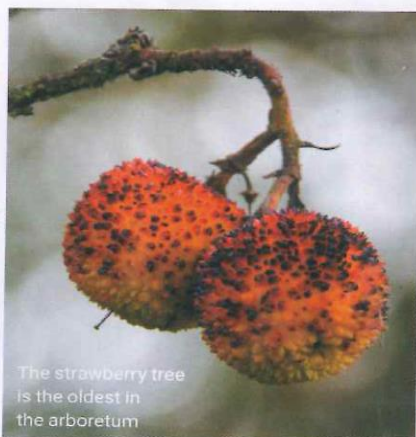


As the low sun rises on cold December mornings, the Beale Arboretum transforms into a magical wonderland. Now the autumn foliage has fallen, the spectacular bark and fruits of the deciduous trees and the dramatic forms of evergreen conifers in the Pinetum are revealed in all their winter glory.

The collection at the Beale Arboretum in Hadley Wood includes more than 4,500 trees set amidst the 35 acres of West Lodge Park Hotel. As well as maintaining National Plant Collections of hornbeams, Indian bean trees and swamp cypress, the arboretum is planning the UK's first National Plant Collection of giant redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). These conifers originate from the Sierra Nevada in California and are the largest trees on earth in terms of volume. Beale has several specimen sequoias and a grand avenue of 50 young trees planted in 2013 to commemorate 50 years since the founding of the arboretum.

The Pinetum displays a large collection of conifers from around the world. The tallest pine in the arboretum is a magnificent Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*), which has cones that remain on the tree in its natural habitat for years before eventually cracking open in the extreme heat of forest fires. Another impressive specimen, the Bhutan pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), has spread 18m or more since it was planted in 1963. It creates an elegant outline with long blue-grey needles that hang down from its branches like feathery tassels.

One of the most picturesque conifers in the collection is the 230-year-old atlas cedar



The strawberry tree is the oldest in the arboretum

(*Cedrus atlantica*). Andrew Beale, managing director and grandson of Edward Beale who founded the arboretum, points out that unlike many cedars planted in parks, this tree has been allowed to retain its lower branches which grow horizontally, emphasising the tree's spreading form.

Although most of us do not have room to grow imposing conifers such as giant redwoods or atlas cedars, there are smaller evergreen trees that can provide year-round interest in domestic gardens. Andrew shows me one of the strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*) that was planted in 1760 and is reputedly the oldest tree in the arboretum. Despite its age, this veteran is only 10m tall. Originating from the Mediterranean, the strawberry tree is often overlooked as a

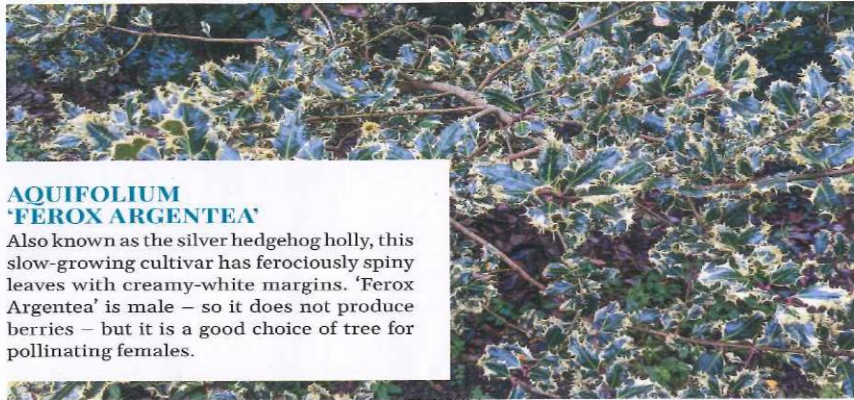
garden species, but it has delicate bell-shaped creamy-white flowers in autumn, spherical fruits that take up to a year to ripen, and red-brown bark that peels back revealing warm cinnamon layers beneath. In more restricted spaces, *Arbutus unedo* 'Compacta' is ideal as it grows to a mere 2.5m in height.

In the bareness of winter, the colours and textures of tree bark are far more noticeable than at other times of year. Andrew recommends the paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*), a superb garden tree with curls of coppery bark that he describes as 'shining out on wet winter days'. He also likes the ghostly white bark of the Himalayan birch (*Betula utilis* subsp *jacquemontii*), another of the arboretum's winter stars. For smaller gardens, *B utilis* subsp *jacquemontii* 'Moonbeam' and 'Trinity College' remain compact, reaching around 5m in 20 years.

The crab apple collection adds interest to the arboretum throughout the seasons. The trees welcome in spring with clouds of pink and white blossom beloved by pollinating insects. Colourful fruits ripen in autumn and persist well into winter. *Malus* 'Evereste' is Andrew's favourite cultivated variety. Perfect for a small garden, this popular tree has yellow-orange autumn foliage, fruits reliably and won't outgrow its space. He describes the crab apples 'like miniature Coxes' with their orange, red and yellow shades. Rowans also provide colour in the arboretum with fiery autumn foliage and clusters of berries that last through much of the winter. Andrew particularly likes *Sorbus hupehensis*, which has pale berries flushed with pink, and the snow-white berries of *Sorbus cashmiriana*. >

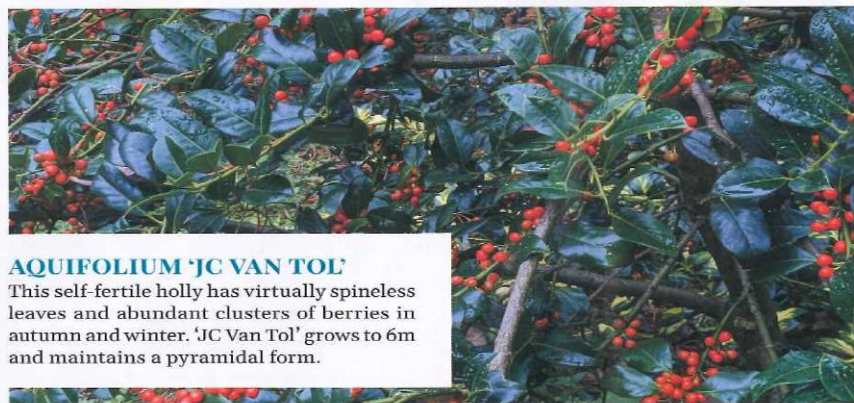
Five of the best hollies for small gardens

What better evergreen for a winter garden than holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) with the characteristic spiny leaves and red berries that adorn Christmas cards and decorate our houses through the festive season? There are more than 20 cultivated varieties of holly in the collection at the arboretum, including many that are suitable for smaller gardens.



AQUIFOLIUM 'FEROX ARGENTEA'

Also known as the silver hedgehog holly, this slow-growing cultivar has ferociously spiny leaves with creamy-white margins. 'Ferox Argentea' is male – so it does not produce berries – but it is a good choice of tree for pollinating females.



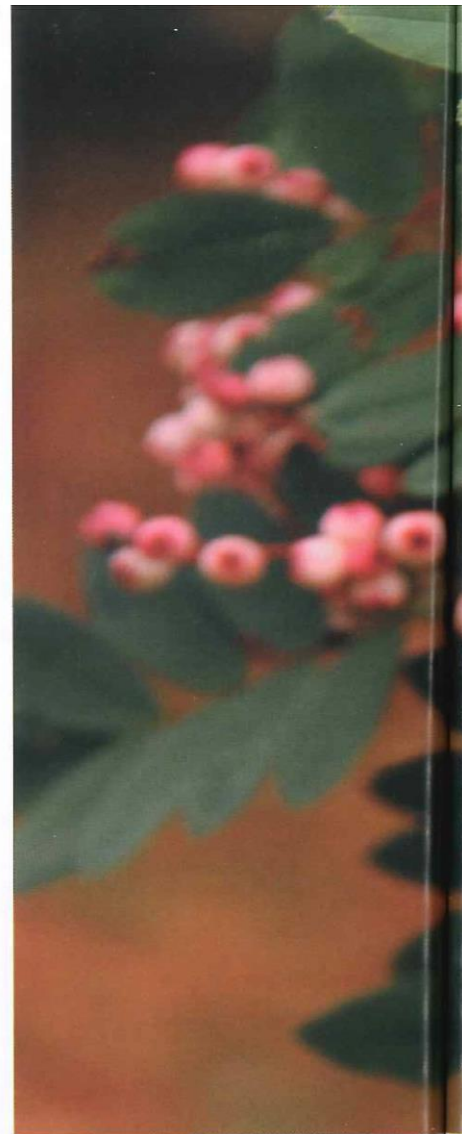
AQUIFOLIUM 'JC VAN TOL'

This self-fertile holly has virtually spineless leaves and abundant clusters of berries in autumn and winter. 'JC Van Tol' grows to 6m and maintains a pyramidal form.



AQUIFOLIUM 'HANDSWORTH NEW SILVER'

With its creamy-yellow variegated foliage, purple stems and profusion of red berries, 'Handsworth New Silver' is a lovely compact tree. Like most hollies, this female cultivar can be grown in partial shade, but the leaf colour develops best in full sun.



ILEX X ALTRACLARENSIS 'GOLDEN KING'

Despite its name, 'Golden King' is a female holly with rounded green leaves edged with irregular gold margins. This attractive tree reaches 6m at maturity. Unless they are self-fertile, female hollies require a nearby male in order to produce berries.

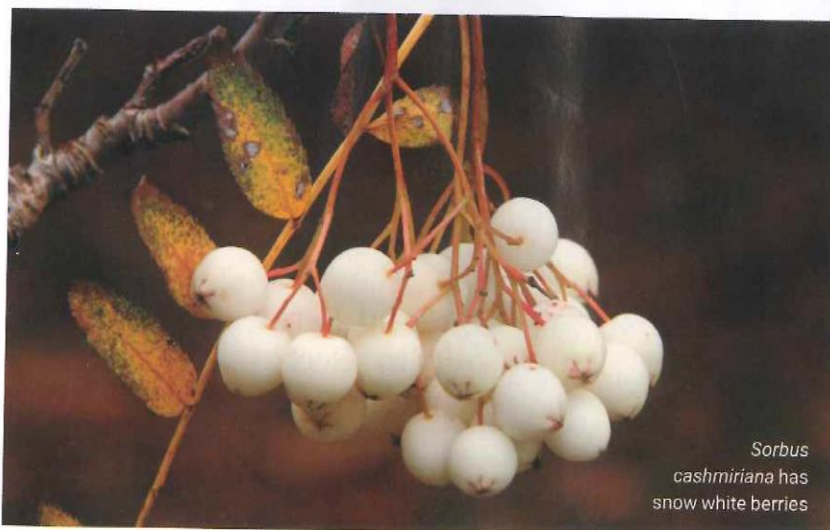
X MESERVEAE BLUE PRINCE ('CONABLU')

Raised in New York, this male cultivar is also known as the Blue Holly in reference to the blue-green foliage.

One of the best pollinators for *Ilex aquifolium* and *I x altaclerensis* females, this is another slow-growing, compact holly suitable for smaller gardens.



Sorbus hupehensis is a particular favourite of the arboretum's managing director Andrew Beale



Sorbus cashmiriana has snow white berries

VISIT THE BEALE ARBORETUM

The arboretum is open to the public every day and descriptive leaflets are available at reception. Admission: £3.50, children free. Free entry if you have a drink or meal at the hotel. Tours of the arboretum for parties of 10 or more are bookable in advance. Lasting around one-and-a-half hours, they are usually taken by the managing director, Andrew Beale. Tours are free midweek and £3.50 per person at weekends. For bookings, please ring Jane Gray on 020 8216 3904. ●

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