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Ilex verticillata

[Synonyms : *Ilex bronxensis*, *Ilex fastigiata*, *Ilex verticillata* var. *cyclophylla*, *Ilex verticillata* var. *fastigiata*, *Ilex verticillata* var. *padifolia*, *Ilex verticillata* var. *tenuifolia*, *Prinos confertus*, *Prinos gronovii*, *Prinos verticillatus*]

WINTERBERRY is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern North America (from Canada to Wisconsin and Florida) it has tiny inconspicuous, white flowers and leaves which turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as American black alder, Black alder, Black American alder, Brook alder, Common winterberry, Coonberry, Deciduous winterberry, False alder, Feverbark, Feverbush, Holly, Michigan holly, Red-berried alder, Striped alder, and Virginian winterberry.

Warning – the berries can be poisonous.

Verticillata means “whorled (round an axis)”.

It is understood that the berries are particularly attractive to birds.

Locally its leaves have provided a substitute tea.

Winterberry, like white holly (*Ilex opaca*), has been used for decoration during festivals.

Authorities note that the plant was used medicinally by North American Indian tribes (primarily for treating diarrhoea, malarial disorders and skin diseases). The Iroquois also used it in the treatment of hay fever, and to cause vomiting when this was necessary – and even when it probably was not as a cure for instance for madness.

Winterberry came to be recognized formally in the pharmacopoeia of the United States but it is rarely turned to now, even in folk medicine.