

# Harvest at Mill Creek Holly

Excerpt from *The Other Christmas Crops: Unique Plants Create a Niche Market*

By [Mateusz Perkowski](#)

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*Photo 1: Don Harteloo, owner of Mill Creek Holly Farms near Stayton, Ore., examines holly growing on his property*

Harteloo and his wife, Sue, sell their holly to wholesale buyers. They also make wreaths and other decorations, which are sold online.

Most buyers want red berries on their holly and prefer variegated cultivars with leaves that have cream-colored edges, Sue Harteloo said.

To prevent leaves and berries from falling off after harvest, the branches are dipped in a rare plant hormone, Don Harteloo said.

“It’s very expensive. A thousand dollars a gallon,” he said.

## Harvest by shotgun

The Harteloos also sell “kissing balls” that incorporate mistletoe, a parasitic plant that infects oak trees.

A farmer near Silverton has enough mistletoe growing wild on his property to supply their yearly needs.

“It doesn’t take much to go a long ways,” Harteloo said.

The mistletoe is collected using ladders or shears on long poles, but when it’s particularly inaccessible, Harteloo resorts to firearms.

“You can shoot it down, usually with a shotgun,” he said.



*Photo 2: A worker harvests holly with red berries at Mill Creek Holly Farms*



*Photo 3: Christmas decorations made with holly grown at Mill Creek Holly Farms near Stayton, Ore.*