JAPANESE HOLLY CARE

LIGHT

Japanese holly (Ilex crenata) grows in sun to partial shade. In Maine, choose a protected position away from drying winter winds and exposed corners. Dense foliage is useful for low hedges and foundation planting, but the named cultivar determines its eventual size.

WATER

Check new root balls regularly and water deeply when they begin to dry. Established shrubs also need attention during prolonged drought. Keep the roots adequately moist going into winter without leaving them saturated. Containers require more frequent checks and protection from severe root freezing.

SOIL & PLANTING

Plant in acidic, well-drained soil with the root flare near the surface. Mulch the surrounding root area lightly, leaving the stem bases clear. Do not automatically add lime around this acid-loving shrub. Confirm the cultivar's local hardiness and mature dimensions before choosing a site.

FEEDING

Test the soil if leaves become pale or growth is weak. High soil pH can cause yellowing, and extra fertilizer alone may not solve it. Apply any recommended nutrients at the labeled rate. Avoid strong late-season feeding that encourages soft growth before winter.

SEASONAL CARE

Prune lightly to shape before or during early growth, preserving a natural outline where possible. Remove dead or damaged stems after assessing winter injury. Keep sheared hedges slightly wider at the base so lower foliage receives light. Avoid repeated late-autumn trimming.

HELPFUL TIPS

Small rounded leaves can resemble boxwood, but this is a holly with different soil preferences. Some cultivars are male, including Compacta, and should not be expected to carry berries. On female selections, compatible male flowers are needed for fruit. Holly berries are not food for people or pets.