



Seasonal Winter Highlights



Eastern White Pine *Pinus strobus*. The largest northeastern pine white pines have unique blue-green, 5" long needles that are set in bundles of five. These needles are rich in vitamin C and can be made into a winter immunity tea. The steam from this tea can also be inhaled to help clear congestion. Male and female flowers are present on the same tree (monecious) and after pollination, the female flowers develop into 6-8" long, narrow cones. The seeds inside the cones are eaten by many birds, rabbits, and squirrels throughout the winter. Often used in reforestation efforts, its seeds easily germinate in many different forest types.



Eastern Red-cedar *Juniperus virginiana*. Often called a pioneer species, red-cedars are one of the first trees to grow in a meadow or fallow field. With bark that peels off in sheets, cedar tree trunks are often stripped by squirrels to line their nests. The fruits, which are eaten by squirrels, wild turkey, deer and other wildlife are blue-green and resemble berries but are in fact cones with fused scales. Red-cedar wood is prized for its natural pest repellent qualities as well as resistance to rot.



Christmas Fern *Polystichum acrostichoides*. As you walk the trails of the Preserve, you can't help but notice this evergreen fern prevalent throughout. Christmas fern thrives in wooded areas and really stands out especially after it snows. The fronds (leaves) are once pinnately compound, meaning they are only divided one time. Each division, called a pinna looks similar to a stocking hung on a line. That, as well as it being an evergreen, gives rise to the common name Christmas fern.



Canada Hemlock *Tsuga canadensis*. With short, flat needles that are dark green on top and have two white bands on the back, Canada hemlock is an easily recognized evergreen. Not to be confused with the poison hemlock *Conium maculatum* that killed Socrates, and is native to Europe and North Africa, our native hemlock is not poisonous. Unfortunately, this Pennsylvania state tree is threatened in many areas because of an invasive non-native pest called the Hemlock wooly adelgid. The Preserve has a large stand of hemlock trees on the Azalea Trail.



American Holly *Ilex opaca*. Often used in holiday decorations, the American holly's abundance of evergreen foliage covers its branches from top to bottom. The thick, leathery leaves are accented with spines that save them from being browsed by hungry herbivores, while the clusters of tart red globular fruits are a valuable food source for many of the Preserve's residents including mockingbirds, red-bellied woodpeckers, wild turkeys, and racoons. These colorful fruits, produced only on female trees, are ripe from early fall until spring, becoming more palatable after a frost.