


Mistletoe and Christmas holly

When Balder, the son of the Norse goddess Frigga, was killed by an arrow made of mistletoe by Loki, and evil spirit, she wept tears of white berries which brought him back to life. Overjoyed, Frigga blessed the plant and bestowed to kiss all who passed beneath it.

Mistletoe was held sacred by the Norse, the Celtic Druids and the North American Indians. The Druid priests would cut mistletoe from an oak tree with a golden sickle. The branches had to be caught before they touched the ground. They then divided the branches into many sprigs and distributed them to the people, who hung them over doorways as protection against thunder, lightning and other evils. The folklore continued over the centuries. It was believed that a sprig placed in a baby's cradle would protect the child from goblins. Giving a sprig to the first cow calving after New Year would protect the entire herd.

 **Holly** was the sacred plant of Saturn and was used at the Roman Saturnalia festival to honor him. Romans gave one another holly wreaths and carried them about decorating images of Saturn with it. It was used as folk medicine for toothache, measles and dog bites.



Mistletoe before it becomes a wreath

Mistletoe and holly at Christmas

To avoid persecution during the Roman pagan festival of Saturnalis, the early Christians decked their homes with Saturnalia holly. As Christian numbers increased and their customs prevailed, holly and mistletoe lost their pagan associations and became symbols of Christmas.

Peace and joy... and kisses

Mistletoe is a symbol for peace and joy. The idea originated in the ancient times of