

Most plants bloom in the spring, bear their fruits in the summer, and are dormant in the winter. Most plants don't need a bird to propagate them. Most plants have their roots in the earth and grow upwards towards the sun. And most plants are not an excuse for kissing. Mistletoe is a most universal plant. Notice this parasite up in the branches of trees, more noticeable after the leaves have fallen. In late autumn you will see it as a green globe up in the trees. Maybe we can knock some off of a walnut tree with the toss of a nut.

Mistletoe seems unearthly. Unlike other plants, it blooms and fruits in the winter, when most plants are dormant. Both the blooms and the berries are white, which is another oddity.

Birds eat the seeds and carry them to other trees, where they get "planted." The seed sprouts a shoot which falls back on the branch to make the root. Another strange trait of mistletoe is that it has no seed leaves, and every leaf looks the same. Most plants have very simple leaves at first, which later leaves becoming more characteristic of that plant, and then becoming smaller before flowering. Mistletoe does not have that metamorphosis of the leaf.

With no thought of where the earth and sun are, mistletoe grows equally in all directions, forming a ball. It doesn't grow upward like most plants do, it just grows outwards with no sense of gravity.

Ancient people noticed mistletoe's uniqueness. In Scandinavian mythology, Baldur, the sun-god, was protected from all plants except mistletoe, by which he was slain. Gallic druids held the mistletoe in high veneration, especially when it grew in the sacred oak groves. A white robed priest would cut it with a golden knife, catch it in a white mantle, and then two white bulls would be sacrificed on the spot. Their name for mistletoe meant all-heal, and indeed this curious plant is used medically.

Although poisonous, mistletoe is an important ingredient in Iscador, a treatment for cancer. In alternative medicine the forces involved in plant growth are examined. Mistletoe's nature tends to be opposite of the normal, so it is used to fight the abnormal growth of cancer, helping the human life energy life to gain control over the affected area.

We hang mistletoe in our hallway for the holidays. If you are caught underneath it, you open yourself up for a kiss. What a sweet way to celebrate a merry Christmas and a happy new year.