



## Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article      November 24, 2015

### Hollies

by Lydia Holley

Do you have hollies in your garden? It is traditional in the Holley family to grow hollies. I have continued that tradition, planting numerous hollies in my garden. Hollies are easy to love, as they are generally very easy-care, most are evergreen, and some sport bright and beautiful berries.



Hollies are also very versatile. Since there are so many different hollies to choose from, you can find the perfect holly for almost any place in your garden. Want a holly hedge? Try dwarf Burford hollies. Although this is a dwarf, don't let that fool you into thinking this plant is small. You can keep these hollies trimmed to around six feet tall, but without trimming will eventually grow to over 10 feet.

Looking for a specimen tree? Nellie R Stevens holly might be the perfect plant for you. Growing to around 25 feet tall, Nellie R Stevens has prickly leaves and grows in a pyramidal shape. Best of all, according to Texas A&M, this holly does not require a male plant nearby to produce berries.

If you like the thought of a holly, but have your heart set on a deciduous tree instead of an evergreen one, try the Possumhaw holly, *Ilex decidua*. Because it loses its leaves in winter, the berries of female Possumhaw hollies are easy to see and are quite striking in the winter landscape.

If you are looking for tall, thin hollies, you may want to try *Ilex crenata* 'Sky Pencil' or *Ilex vomitoria* 'Will Fleming'. If you need a short plant, again, there are numerous hollies that you can use. 'Helleri' holly grows in a rounded shape to around 4 ft tall and wide. Dwarf yaupon hollies can be kept trimmed even shorter, and can be used as a substitute for boxwood.

Yaupon holly's latin name, *Ilex vomitoria*, is very descriptive, but not very flattering. According to the Texas A&M Forest Service, its latin name came from the native American ceremonial tea which was brewed from yaupon holly leaves. This tea was known as the "Black Drink", and caused one to become ill.

The non-dwarf form of yaupon holly can grow to the size of a small tree, and are commonly seen in East Texas. If you're looking for something a little more unusual, you may like the weeping form.

If you have avoided hollies because of their reputation for having prickly leaves, try *Ilex crenata* 'Soft Touch'. It's a small shrub, growing only to around 3 feet tall and wide, and as advertised, is soft to the touch.

These are just a few of the numerous hollies available. It could be quite fun to have a holly collection. Even if you only want one or two in your landscape, hollies can make a cheerful addition to the winter garden. If you have a spot in your landscape that needs filling, most likely, you can find a holly that will meet your requirements.

For more information, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com) or call 903-675-6130.