

Ebersole Holly Collection
Sandhills Horticultural Gardens
Sandhills Community College, Pinehurst, NC
USDA Hardiness Zone 7B

The year 2012 continued to provide us with many challenges for our Holly Collection. We continue to see decline in the older cultivars of our English Hollies and we are also struggling with the ever-increasing shade problem in our collection. When the majority of our hollies were planted in the early eighties, the longleaf pines in the garden were much smaller. Since then, obviously, we have watched this dominant tree continue to grow larger and larger and create a shade canopy over our holly collection. Many of our hollies continue to struggle with this problem.

The English holly collection remains the area with the most significant decline. We are watching the slow decline of most of the hollies in this collection. The cuttings that we had sent to Hefner's Nursery in Conover did not arrive in good condition so we did not receive many grafted English hollies back to us for replanting. We do plan to try one more time to attempt to save the ones that are still hanging on.

In our Japanese holly collection we continue to deal with the root rot problem that seems to be plaguing them here in the Sandhills of North Carolina. We have lost two more 'Stokes' hollies as well as a 'Tiny' cultivar. The one shining star in the Japanese Holly Collection is 'Snow Flake'. It seems to be performing well, even with the continued shading problem. Cultivars 'Convexa' and 'Heller' seem to be unaffected as well by the root rot situation and the shade situation.

Our American holly collection and our Chinese holly collections still seem to perform the best in our arboretum. The American hollies are affected the most by the excessive shade problem we are having, as they are not as dense as we would like for them to be. In situations where the shade is not an issue, they look much better. One particular cultivar, 'Fallow', is an excellent example of this and is by far one of the better performing hollies in this part of the gardens. We spent a lot of time last year cutting back our deciduous hollies, hoping for some rejuvenation of these species, but they have been very slow to recover. We may have to apply more water this summer to encourage their re-growth. This past summer was probably the hottest summer on record in North Carolina. Recorded maximum temperature for the Holly Garden this past summer was 100° F (38° C), and that was in the shady canopy of the trees. We set records this year, with temperatures recorded well over 104° F (40° C). We were again restricted in our irrigation practices so I do believe this may have affected their growth.

Some of the highlights of our garden include our planting of *Ilex opaca* 'Maryland Dwarf'. The mass of the three plants we have probably encompasses an area of over 400 square feet. It is definitely one of the most impressive plantings we have in the garden this year. It has never shown any sign of die-back or disease of any kind. The *I. koehneana* hybrids also appear as

stars in this garden. They are dark green and pyramidal in shape with absolutely no pruning. The *I. rotunda* (Korean seedling) that was planted in 1982 is an absolutely beautiful tree. I am not very familiar with this species, but I definitely think it is noteworthy and worth mentioning in my report.

I have listed the plants from the Holly of the Year program below and have indicated pros and cons as follows:

Ilex opaca 'Satyr Hill' - this holly is in total shade now and struggles. It has become very thin and sparse.

I. koehneana 'Lassie' - even though this holly has become shaded out, it has managed to perform fairly well. It has lost several branches on the bottom of the tree but remains very thick on top where it is in more sun.

I. attenuata 'Sunny Foster' - this holly continues to do very well for us here in the South. Our plants are in full shade so the brightness of the new foliage is not very evident. In another area of the garden where shade is not an issue, it is much brighter. Overall, it performs very well for us.

I. 'Sceptre' - for some reason, we have experienced a lot of die-back on this plant. The top quarter of the plant has been lost to dieback as have some lower branches. Other cultivars nearby seem to be fine and not affected by the dieback.

I. 'Nellie R. Stevens' - its hard to not sing the praises of this holly here! Even though many people think it is being overused, it is hard to beat this holly for its drought resistance and overall toughness.

I. pedunculosa - considering the amount of shade this plant experiences it has done surprisingly well in our garden. It has held on to quite a few berries from last year and has maintained a nice dark green color.

Even though we are struggling with many plants in our collection here in the Horticultural Gardens of Sandhills Community College, we continue to work with what we have to try to improve the collection as well as save as many of the plants as we can. We still have some very beautiful specimens and invite all to visit when you are in the area.

Johanna Westmen