

Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest  
Clermont, KY (USDA Hardiness Zone 6a)

A much welcomed mild spring brought with it adequate moisture throughout our region for the year 2013. Bernheim's collections benefited from this much needed relief after the previous summer's record-breaking heat. High temperatures for all months were in line with historic averages. Temperatures never topped 93 °F (34 °C) during the year. Average lows for January, February, and December were 28 °F (-2.2 °C), 27 °F (-2.8 °C), and 28 °F (-2.2 °C), respectively, with the lowest recorded temperature of the year in February at 9 °F (-12.8 °C). Our total rainfall was almost 52 in. (1.3 m), with 15 in. (38.1 cm) of that during our warmest months, June, July, and August. Growth throughout the holly collection was excellent and many specimens experienced a strong push of new growth. Shoot elongation among the *Ilex opaca* was far superior than what we have experienced in many years. Despite prolonged rainy periods, pollination was excellent throughout the hollies. Fruits were plentiful and colored nicely as the season progressed.

The *I. opaca* are becoming quite large and continue to outgrow the 24 ft. (7.3 m) square planting grid established in the 1970s. This makes for close quarters when mulching and mowing the area but is quite welcoming when strolling through this forest of demure beauties. The management strategy within this collection is to let the plants grow naturally in shape and form. However, with age, the lower branches are taking root, and sprouting suckers have become more prolific. For many years we have been carefully pruning the branches that have contact with the soil to dissuade this natural tendency of the plants to spread and survive. In doing so, we have improved airflow and reduced suckering within the collection without noticeably altering its natural appearance.

No additional accessions were planted this year and there were no losses either. Several new conifers were added to the evergreen screen that protects our holly collection from winter winds and they will certainly bring additional color to this area of the Arboretum. *Thuja occidentalis* and *Pinus densiflora* were among the new trees added along the Twin Ponds Loop trail, which meanders through the holly collection.

We are pleased to announce that our new feature, "Earth Measure," officially opened this year. This grand piece is composed of over 50 tons (45.4 tonnes) of limestone blocks, which were carved and transformed into a visually and acoustically stimulating work of art. The sculpture is located amidst our *Aesculus* and *Ulmus* collections and borders the Big Prairie, a 32-acre (13 hectares) planting of native warm season grasses and forbs. This area serves as the perfect backdrop for this timeless installation that will be enjoyed for many generations.

Bernheim welcomes everyone to visit and explore our landscapes and forests. We look forward to the coming year and the opportunities it will bring to continue our mission: connecting people with nature. Visit us on the web at [www.bernheim.org](http://www.bernheim.org).

Eric Garris, Horticulturist