

## RUTGERS GARDENS

New Brunswick, NJ USDA Hardiness Zone 6b

New Jersey began 2014 with the coldest January in ten years. At Rutgers Gardens, we received over 20 inches (51 cm) of snow, with 2 particularly significant snowfalls on January 3 and 22. Our coldest day of the year was 10 °F (−12.2 °C) on January 8, with our coldest 2014 nighttime low of −1 °F (−18.3 °C) on January 4. In February we received over 26 inches (66 cm) more snow, including a big storm on February 13 and 14 of 10.6 inches (27 cm) and another 9.3 inches (23.6 cm) between February 3 to 5. March continued the cool trend, but with practically no snow at all, and it would have been one of the driest on record if not for the 3.5 inches (9 cm) of rain from March 29 to 31. April was a little warmer than average, despite a snow flurry overnight on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Our last below freezing night of the spring was 30 °F (−1.1 °C) on April 21. It was also very dry, although a heavy rain from April 30 to May 1 totaled over 5 inches (12.7 cm). May was slightly warmer and wetter than average, with nearly 7 inches (18 cm) of rain. June was a little warmer than average, with 4 days of 90 °F (>32.2 °C) and above, and of normal rainfall. July was average in temperature, but extremely wet here at Rutgers, with more than 7 inches (18 cm) of precipitation—almost 2 inches (5 cm) above the normal average for the state. Our hottest day of the year was 95 °F (35 °C) on July 3, with only four other July days at 90 °F (>32.2 °C) or above. In August, the heavy rain missed us, and we were considerably drier than average, with only 1.9 inches (4.8 cm) of rain (2.75 inches [7 cm] below the state average). Although much of the state was below average temperature, we were about 9 °F (5 °C) above normal, with an average monthly temp of 82.5 °F (28.1 °C). We had an extremely dry September, about 2.5 inches (6.4 cm) below the normal average, and were also 12 °F (7 °C) above the normal temperature highs, averaging almost 80 °F (26.6 °C). October was also warmer than usual, with an average monthly high of 68 °F (20 °C), and still 0.5 inches (1.3 cm) below the average precipitation for the state. October 20 saw our first below freezing night of 31 °F (−0.6 °C). Ongoing above average temperatures in November averaged 51 °F (10.6 °C), with only 6 days below 40 °F (4.4 °C) in the last half of the month, but wet, at nearly 1 inch (1.5 cm) above normal. After the first week, nighttime temperatures cooled considerably, and our first 0.5 inches (1.3 cm) of snow fell on November 27. Our dreary, cloudy December was warmer than usual, at 11 °F (6 °C) above average. We received about 1.25 inches (3.2 cm) more precipitation than usual, mostly as rain, receiving less than 0.25 inches (0.6 cm) of snow.

We were happy to host the HSA's 66<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, held October 22 to 25, which was attended by 56 people from across the country. Overall, 2014 was a good year for hollies at Rutgers Gardens. The *Ilex opaca* had fine berry crops, and the winterberry hollies also looked good. 'Portia Orton', 'Dan Fenton', 'Galyean Gold' and a number of others looked quite nice. No new hollies were added this year, although considerable time was spent rejuvenating our many existing older trees. The hollies in the southwest part of the garden, behind the Holly House, continue to decline due to damage caused to the tile drains when water mains were installed a number of years ago. Much of the collection was trimmed up, and several old plants were cleared of the large seedlings and suckers that were beginning to overtake them. Many vines were pulled from the trees—an ongoing battle. Perhaps most notable was the addition of beautiful new signage with the botanical information for each plant, which we were able to install thanks to a generous donation. We also took a full inventory of the over 450 the trees in our collection, checking names, confirming locations, and recreating updated new maps of the collection. We plan to cull a few duplicates of the older American Hollies soon to thin out the plot a bit and make room for a few new specimens.

Our holly collection began as an evaluation of varieties in the 1950s and became the foundation of Dr. Elwin Orton's American Holly (*I. opaca*) breeding program. The original planting, together with some of Dr. Orton's recent selections (including 'Dan Fenton', 'Jersey Princess', 'Jersey Delight', and 'Jersey Knight'), make up one of the largest American Holly collections in the United States. In addition, our collection includes a wide range of other *Ilex* species and hybrids, including noteworthy specimens of *I. opaca* (such as 'Galyean Gold' and 'Boyce Thompson Xanthocarpa'), *I. perado* (Madeira holly), *I. × altaclerensis* 'James G. Esson', and other interesting

hybrids. Also represented are numerous English hollies (*I. aquifolium*), Chinese hollies (*I. purpurea* and *I. cornuta*), Japanese hollies (*I. crenata*), Inkberry hollies (*I. glabra*), and well over 50 deciduous hollies (including *I. decidua*, *I. montana*, *I. serrata*, *I. verticillata*, and others).

As the botanical garden for Rutgers University, Rutgers Gardens encompasses nearly 180 acres of maintained and natural areas, featuring not only gardens, but various programs for community, faculty, and students to enjoy. Among our annual featured events and programs are the Spring Flower Fair, a summer Open House, Fall Festival, display and vegetable gardens, undergraduate internships, and children's programs. Our holly collection is a focal point on many walks and tours on the grounds.

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