

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ARBORETUM  
Oak Ridge, TN USDA Hardiness Zone 7a-6b

The Holly Task Force for the UT Arboretum Society (UTAS) entered another year focusing on care and maintenance of the Elmore Holly Collection.

The winter temperatures started out well below normal in January, producing a killing freeze for parts of the Arboretum. Over half of the Pawpaw tree grove, planted near the Harold Elmore Holly collection, was lost as a result of this weather. Some damage to the Holly collection was also noted during the spring work day. Several of the viburnums, planted in the old Holly collection area located along the valley road, were also lost. Temperatures dropped below normal again in March, July, and November. Precipitation lagged behind normal levels throughout the year producing an overall annual rainfall deficient of 4-5 inches (10-13 cm). Fortunately, July rainfall was about 2 inches (5 cm) above normal, helping sustain the Holly collection through the hot summer months. October, traditionally the driest month in Tennessee, proved to be one of the wettest on record.

The Holly Task Force organizes two "Holly Work Days" each year, the first in early April and another in early November. On April 5, 2014, the Holly Task Force and UT Arboretum staff gathered 13 volunteers to help with spring maintenance. Dr. Will Witte also documented hollies that had not survived the winter or were endangered. Fran Scheidt prepared a list of hollies that were to be replaced and new cultivars to add to the collection. The UT Arboretum Holly Accession file was updated in the spring of 2014 into an Excel format. Helping with this were Fran Scheidt, Dr. Will Witte, Nancy Smith, Bob Reed, the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center and volunteer staff members. They then transferred the updated file into the official UT Arboretum excel database.

In East Tennessee we have noted difficulty with survival and resilience of the Blue Hollies (*Ilex x meserveae*); new improved cultivars will be added to the collection and tested as they become available. Spring is an especially important time for maintenance because the UT Arboretum and The Elmore Holly Collection are a featured destination in the "Dogwood Arts Festival," a popular springtime event in East Tennessee that is celebrated annually.

Fran Scheidt attended the 2014 National Meeting of the Holly Society of America held in Rutgers N.J. in October 2014 and brought back 17 new hollies donated by the Holly Society or purchased at their plant auction. The committee potted them up in larger containers on November 5 and will plant those that are mature enough on the fall Holly Work Day. At the national meeting, Fran was honored with the prestigious Holly Society of America's Wolf-Fenton Award, given to an individual for outstanding contributions and dedicated service in the field of holly. We are proud for Fran to receive this honorable award and note that Fran has two personal holly cultivars registered by the Holly Society of America, 'Frantastic' and 'Volunteer Orange'. Both these plants grow in the Elmore Holly Collection.

In early November, representatives of the Holly task Force hosted Norris Garden Club for an overview slide presentation about the UT Arboretum and led a field tour of the Elmore Holly Collection. In early November, site preparation work for the new auditorium was scheduled to begin near the Elmore Holly Collection which required removal of several of the Korean test hollies Dr. Will Witte produced from the US National Arboretum botanical exploration of the Korean peninsula in 1985. On November 12 cuttings and photos were taken before removal; these will be propagated by Dr. Witte. Six of these Korean hollies will be registered by Dr. Witte in 2015 with the National Arboretum and the Holly Society of America. The fall work day was later held on November 15, 2014.

A bitter cold and inclement day reduced the number of volunteers available for maintenance. General maintenance and cleanup was performed and volunteers were invited to collect live holly cuttings for use in their personal holiday decorations. The fall work day will be scheduled earlier in October in 2015 with hopes of improved weather.

The Elmore Holly Collection was featured in Farm Bureau Magazine. The November 2014 issue of *Tennessee Home & Farm* magazine photographed the hollies in January 2014 when berries are near their peak. Arboretum Director Kevin Hoyt said, "People come here specifically to see the holly collection. It's a way of showcasing hollies around the world and those native to US and Tennessee." UT Gardens Director, Sue Hamilton,

also wrote articles featuring the Elmore Holly Collection. They appeared in *UT Gardens Magazine* Fall/Winter 2014/15 (“Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly”) and in the Home & Garden section of *The Knoxville-News Sentinel* (“Boughs of Holly”). American Holly was again featured prominently as part of the annual holiday decorations on the road entrance sign to the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center.

On January 1, 2015, the Arboretum Society’s 1<sup>st</sup> Annual New Year’s Day Hike took place up the Old Hickory Trail at the arboretum that culminated at the Elmore Holly Collection where Holly Task Force Head Dennis Superczynski gave a brief introduction to the collection. Hikers were amazed at the vast number of berries on all the hollies and the natural beauty overlooking the collection.

Progress has continued on the UT Arboretum Auditorium construction project throughout the late fall despite the wet weather. The building, when completed, will serve as a catalyst for future research programs, event programming, community outreach, landscape demonstration plantings, UT Arboretum Society membership development and revenue generation for the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center. The auditorium is being constructed with Douglas fir roof trusses and laminated tongue and groove ceiling boards from the West Coast. Other sustainable solid wood and composite materials, manufactured in the eastern US, are being used for framing, roof support and the building walls. The fireplace and porch accent stone masonry work is being constructed with locally mined rock from the Tennessee Cumberland Plateau. When completed, the building will blend in aesthetically with the pastoral settings of the UT Arboretum. The official ground breaking of the auditorium took place in late September 2014, which occurred during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the UT Arboretum. The building opened in late September, occurring during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the UT Arboretum Society. This facility will bring more attention to the Elmore Holly Collection due to its proximity to the auditorium.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Elmore Holly Collection at the UT Arboretum occurs in 2014/15. In 1984 the UT Arboretum Society Board of Directors approved a proposal from Harold Elmore to establish a formal “Holly Garden” and UTAS adopted it a central program objective. They then created the Holly Task Force, which is still active today. Members of the Holly Task Force, a support team for the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society, are Dennis Superczynski (Leader), Carmen Gianforte, Josie Gianforte, Fran Scheidt, Mike Stansberry, Jan Superczynski, and Dr. Will Witte.

Kevin P. Hoyt, Director, UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center, and Dennis Superczynski, UT Arboretum Society Holly Task Force Chair.



University of Tennessee Arboretum Auditorium  
~Kevin Hoyt