

THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

West Tisbury, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

(USDA Hardiness Zone 7a)

The lowest temperature recorded was -2°F (-19.2°C) on February 21, and the highest temperature recorded was 90°F (32.7°C) on July 20. The most remarkable feature of the weather experienced in 2015 was the significant amount of snow that Polly Hill Arboretum (PHA) received and the duration of cold weather. This anomalous weather pattern began with a major blizzard January 26–27 that left in excess of 19.6" (50 cm) of snow and buffeted the Arboretum with powerful winds. April and May were quite dry but precipitation through the summer was near average until late September when precipitation was above average. Beyond the colder than normal temperatures experienced in January, February and March, the remainder of the year was near or above average. The last two months of the year were noticeably warmer than average.

Table 1: Temperature and precipitation summaries for 2015 recorded at PHA

<u>Month</u>	<u>Monthly mean temperature</u>	<u>Monthly precipitation</u>
January	31 °F (−0.7 °C)	3.13" (79.5 mm)
February	24 °F (−4.4 °C)	2.31" (58.7 mm)
March	33 °F (0.8 °C)	4.40" (111.8 mm)
April	47 °F (8.1 °C)	1.08" (27.4 mm)
May	59 °F (15.1 °C)	0.47" (11.9 mm)
June	64 °F (17.6 °C)	2.92" (74.2 mm)
July	71 °F (21.8 °C)	2.58" (65.5 mm)
August	72 °F (22.4 °C)	3.04" (77.2 mm)
September	67 °F (19.2 °C)	3.34" (84.8 mm)
October	54 °F (12.2 °C)	6.27" (159.3 mm)
November	49 °F (9.5 °C)	3.23" (82.0 mm)
<u>December</u>	<u>48 °F (9.1 °C)</u>	<u>4.73" (120.1 mm)</u>
2015 Total		37.5" (952.4 mm)

Two *Ilex* taxa were accessioned in 2015: one, an existing plant of *I. opaca* and the other, *I. montana*, represented by two distinct seed collections made in the mountains of western North Carolina during a collecting trip lead by PHA. Seven individual holly plants, representing

three taxa, were deaccessioned and removed from the collection:

I. maximowicziana, *I. integra* and *I. crenata*. However, all three taxa are still represented in the collection. These plants were removed to make way for a new education center and botany lab/herbarium that is currently under construction. None were removed due to lack of winter hardiness or climactic adaptability.

Overall, *Ilex* performed well in 2015. Most clones of *I. opaca* performed very well and were highly rated for fruit production. *I. opaca* cultivars of note for excellent performance and heavy fruit set include ‘Jersey Princess’, ‘Martha’s Vineyard’*, ‘Miss Helen’, ‘St. Mary’, ‘Vil-lanova’* and f. *xanthocarpa*. Damage to American hollies caused by holly berry midge (*Asphondylia ilicicola*) continues to be a sporadic problem. Interestingly the most severe infestations were primarily confined to two areas of the Arboretum. In these areas American holly plants had 80–90% of their fruit affected. The clone ‘Barnard Luce’* and ‘Greenhill’* were, in general, the most severely damaged. Other excellent performers in 2014 include *I. × altaclerensis* ‘NYBG No.2’, *I. aquifolium* ‘Evangeline’, ‘Lydia Morris’, ‘Sparkleberry’ and ‘Pernella’*.

(* indicates Polly Hill selections)

2015 HSA Holly of the Year – *I. crenata* ‘Helleri’

The living collection of the Polly Hill Arboretum contains a single plant of this compact cultivar of Japanese Holly. Polly Hill received it in 1961 as a rooted cutting from Mitsch Nursery of Aurora, Oregon. It was moved to its current location along the driveway to the Arboretum’s administrative offices in in 1980. It has performed very well despite the periodic “abuse” it inadvertently gets from snowplows and the occasional careless driver! It has suffered some deer browse but overall has retained a fairly full, dense, compact habit. Other than the pruning received from deer, it is not regularly pruned or shaped by Arboretum staff. It is currently 45” tall by 93” wide at its widest point.

Thomas E. Clark, Curator tom@pollyhillarboretum.org 1-508-693-9426