

TYLER ARBORETUM

Media, Pennsylvania (USDA Hardiness Zone 6)

The year 2015 started off unusually cold for the Philadelphia region, making it the second harsh winter in a row. Temperatures dropped to single digits in January, when the average low is 24 °F (−4.4 °C). February continued the cold trend, with several days of temperatures setting historic low records, and 0 °F (−17.8 °C) temperatures causing more than a few pipes to freeze. The average temperature for the whole month was 10 °F (5.6 °C) below normal, making it the fifth-coldest February on record. The ground froze down to 18" (45.7 cm). There was not much snow this winter; instead, it was a winter of very cold temperatures and then freezing rain/ice at the end of February and beginning of March, though not heavy enough to break many branches, unlike last year. Spring rainfall was light until June when we had heavy rains, then light rain through the summer until September. The effects of El Nino were felt with a warm fall and little rain up through December, with a Christmas Eve at 71 °F (21.7 °C).

As to be expected, the cold temperatures damaged the leaves of some of the less hardy evergreen holly specimens in our collection. *Ilex aquifolium* cultivars and hybrids such as *I. × koehneana*, and *× altaclerensis* suffered the most severe foliar damage. Overall, the *I. opacas* did well, with the exception of ‘William Hawkins’. It sustained extensive leaf burn and had already been sparsely foliated for several years. We pruned it back hard this year in hopes of improving its habit and getting more of it unusual and attractive foliage.

The fruiting on our *I. verticillata* cultivars was outstanding in 2015. The orange-colored fruit on ‘Winter Gold’ and ‘Golden Verboom’ was heavier than last year and complemented the autumn palate of nearby grasses and deciduous trees. Our stands of ‘Winter Red’ stood out strongly by themselves, with fruit lasting through December.

Two new holly taxa were added to our collection in 2015: *I. × aquipernyi* ‘Meschick’ [Dragon Lady®], and an unregistered *I. opaca* cultivar ‘Fastigiata’, selected for its fastigiate habit. We removed 12 holly accessions this year, including the following three taxa no longer represented in the collection: *I. crenata* ‘Convexa’; *I. × meserveae* Blue Stallion® (‘Mesan’); and *I. pedunculosa* ‘Trifructo’. Other hollies removed: *I. opaca* ‘Judge Brown’; *I. × meserveae* ‘Blue Girl’; *I. pernyi*, *I. ciliospinosa*, *I. pedunculosa*, *I. × koehneana* ‘Conayule’ Yule Brite™; *I. verticillata* ‘Winter Gold’, and two *I. verticillata* ‘Jim Dandy’. Most were removed due to declining performance. ‘Convexa’ and ‘Winter Gold’ were removed due to construc-

tion in our barn area. Presently our collection totals 556 *Ilex* accessions representing 146 *Ilex* taxa. A large group of our Holly Collection was planted in the mid-1980s behind our maintenance building. Many of these specimens are beginning to grow into each other as they put on size. The group receives little additional maintenance or pruning.

Our collection contains eight of the Holly-of-the-Year cultivars. Many of these are among the best specimens in our collection. Their 2015 evaluations are described below.

2003: *I. opaca* ‘Satyr Hill’ – Overall excellent and attractive specimen. Excellent habit, excellent foliage, good fruiting.

2005: *I. x koehneana* ‘Lassie’ – This specimen is in a protected site, though is starting to get crowded by other nearby hollies. Good habit, though some branches a little leggy, excellent foliage color, excellent fruit set in the fall.

2006: *I. x attenuata* ‘Sunny Foster’ – This specimen continues to improve in its new sunny situation. Excellent habit, excellent yellow-tipped foliage. We heavily pruned a second specimen that had been hidden by *Hydrangea quercifolia* and hope its new sunny exposure will revitalize it.

2007: *I. aquifolium* ‘Lewis’ – Excellent pyramidal form, with dense branching to the ground. Tips of many leaves brown from winter damage.

2010: *I. verticillata* ‘Red Sprite’ – Good fruiting this year.

2011: *I. (cornuta x aquifolium)* ‘Nellie R. Stevens’ – Good foliage. Specimen is shaded and habit is fair.

2013: *I. pedunculosa* – Condition declined on one specimen with yellowing of leaves and sparse fruiting. It was removed. The specimens in shadier situations have performed better, with greener leaves.

2014: *I. x meserveae* ‘Mesgolg’ Golden Girl™ – We have three specimens, accessioned in 1993. Two have good compact mounded form. The third, which is in a more exposed area, has sparser foliage and is leggier.

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