

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM Washington, DC (USDA Hardiness Zone 7b)

The weather during the first three months of 2015 was average with several minor snowfall events and a few days with night temperatures below 10 °F (-12.2 °C). Once April arrived, it started to warm up and the night temperatures didn't drop below freezing for the rest of the spring. Rainfall tapered off as well until June when we received a whopping 12.9" (32.8 cm) of rain. Over half of the rain that fell during the month happened on three days with over 2.5" (6.4 cm) of rainfall during each storm. This caused flooding and other issues. After June, the rest of the summer was warm and rather dry especially during the months of August and September. Above average temperatures continued into the fall and early winter with a high of 73 °F (22.8 °C) on December 25. It seemed as if it was a year of extremes.

Our *Ilex* collection fared well throughout the year. During the months of August and September we did supplement the collection with irrigation. By mid-fall, most of the *Ilex* collection was fruiting heavily.

Not many plants were added to the collection. The arboretum introduced *I.* × 'Cherry Bomb', which has been in the trade since the 1980's. It originated as an open-pollinated cross between *I. (cornuta × aquifolium)* 'Nellie R. Stevens' and most likely *I. integra*. This plant has done well in the southern United States. There are three plants at the arboretum that have done well here for many years. So, it should be hardy to Zone 7B.

The mapping of the *Ilex* collection is still underway and is available on our web-based Arboretum Botanical Explorer (<http://usna.usda.gov/abe/>). This is a great tool for our staff and visitors in locating plants. Eventually, in addition to the accession information for each plant, there will be images attached.

The Chesapeake Chapter of the HSA returned in November for their annual workday. Although there were only four volunteers, they worked hard and enjoyed the pruning challenges of the collection.

The current status and performance throughout the year of the Holly of the Year:

I. opaca 'Satyr Hill' – Two plants on the grounds, both are in good health and performed well throughout the year.

I. crenata 'Sky Pencil' – Several plants in various locations. The ones that perform best receive adequate moisture during the growing season.

Ilex × koehneana 'Lassie' – Planted out in spring, 2015 and is doing okay.

I. × attenuata ‘Sunny Foster’ – Several plants, all do well in our area. Tolerant of heat and dry periods.

I. aquifolium ‘Lewis’ – Planted out last spring and died in the fall.

I. verticillata ‘Maryland Beauty’ –Planted out in spring, 2015 and is doing well.

I. ‘Scepter’ –Several plants on the grounds, performed well during the last year.

I. verticillata ‘Red Sprite’ – Several plants on the grounds. Good performer, fruit drop by early February.

I. (cornuta × aquifolium) ‘Nellie R. Stevens’ – Our original ‘Nellie Stevens’ is at least 20’ (6.1 m) tall and is always a good performer.

I. aquifolium ‘Proud Mary’ – New plant, still in greenhouse and will be planted this spring

I. pedunculosa – Several accessions on the grounds, most are wild-collected. Perform fairly well in our area, but need adequate moisture during hot spells.

I. × meserveae ‘Mesgolg’ Golden Girl™ – Currently not represented in our holdings.

I. crenata ‘Helleri’ – Many plants of this are in our Japanese Stroll Garden. Tend to get root rot in our heavy soils.

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