

TYLER ARBORETUM

Media, PA (USDA Hardiness Zone 6)

In 2016 we had excellent holly foliage and lighter than usual fruiting season at Tyler Arboretum in Media, Pennsylvania.

The past year has been cited as the warmest year on record globally. In our area January had the fourth heaviest snowfall on record (22" [55.9 cm]) and a plunge to 0 °F (-17.7 °C) in February, but overall the winter was mild. By March it was designated the third warmest winter in our area. Rainfall was below average in spring until May. Precipitation in Pennsylvania is usually spread out fairly evenly over the year, with 3 to 4" (7.6 to 10.2 cm) per month. This year spring was quite dry with rainfall of 2.01" (50.8 cm) in March and 1.75" (4.4 cm) in April, followed by 6.65" (16.9 cm) in May. Summer to fall was again dry and warm, with rainfall several inches below normal. In November two days of heavy rain left large amounts of fruit scattered at the bases of many hollies. The birds also seemed to attack the hollies early and with relish. By the end of November the large mass of *Ilex* by our Visitor Center was completely bare. While most of our clusters of *I. verticillata* had little fruit left on them by fall the two exceptions were the 'Earlibright' and 'Spriber' [Berry Nice®].

Ilex 'Sparkleberry' also was a reliable fruiter. The best overall fruiters in our collection this year were the American hollies. We had a wonderful display of yellow, orange and red fruit on *I. opaca* cultivars such as 'Mary Fleming', 'Boyce Thompson Xanthocarpa', 'Virginia West', and 'Griscom'. A flock of robins was busy devouring them December 28 when I was out observing.

Tyler Arboretum's holly collection consists of 555 accessions representing 145 taxa. *Ilex opaca* make up a significant portion of our collection. We have 166 *I. opaca* specimens and 45 different cultivars. In 2016, we added a mass of five *I. verticillata* 'Winter Red' and one 'Southern Gentleman' in a new garden by our restored barn. We lost six hollies this year, including three *I. mucronata* planted in a natural area by a stream bed that I was unable to locate during inventory. We no longer have that taxa represented in our collection. The other hollies removed were one 'Jim Dandy', one *I. × meserveae* 'Mesog' [China Girl®] and one *I. verticillata* 'Graves #3' due to declining performance.

Our collection contains eight of the Holly-of-the-Year cultivars. Many of these are among the best specimens in our collection. Their 2016 evaluations are below.

2003: *I. opaca* 'Satyr Hill' – overall excellent and attractive specimen; excellent habit, excellent foliage, good fruit in December

2005: *I. × koehneana* 'Lassie' – is in a protected site; starting to get crowded by other nearby hollies; has good habit, excellent foliage color, sparse fruiting

2006: *I. × attenuata* 'Sunny Foster' (f) – excellent habit, excellent yellow-tipped foliage on sunny side; foliage mostly green on shaded side

2007: *I. aquifolium* 'Lewis' – excellent pyramidal form, with dense branching to the ground; good foliage year, very dark green, sparse fruiting

2010: *I. verticillata* 'Red Sprite' – sparse fruiting this year

2011: *I. (cornuta × aquifolium)* 'Nellie R. Stevens' – good foliage; specimen is shaded and habit is fair; few fruit

2013: *I. pedunculosa* – specimen in the sun looks mildly chlorotic; older specimen in the shade has abundant dark green foliage (male plants)

2014: *I. × meserveae* 'Mesgol' Golden Girl'TM – two have good compact mounded form and dense foliage; a third, in a more exposed area, has sparser foliage and is leggy

Alison Dame (Plant Recorder) <https://www.tylerarboretum.org/>