

THE DAWES ARBORETUM

Newark, Ohio USDA Hardiness Zone 5b

The climate for most of 2017 can be described as generally favorable with generous rainfall and only brief periods of dry weather. Our winter low temperatures did not fall below 0 °F (-17.7 °C) and only two single digit recordings occurred, 2 °F (-16.6°C) on January 7 and 1 °F (-17.22 °C) on December 31. Likewise our heat index was unusually low with only two days above 90 °F (32.2 °C): 91 °F (31.3 °C) on June 12 and 90.3 °F (32.38 °C) on September 26. Rainfall measurements exceeded the norm by nearly 6" (152.0 mm) with the yearly total being 38.07" (966.9 mm). Precipitation totals greater than 4" (4.46" [11.3 cm], 4.84" [12.3 cm] and 8.43" [21.4 cm]) were recorded during November, March and July respectively. All in all, it was an excellent year for woody plant growth, and the hollies, both deciduous and evergreen, responded by bearing some of the heaviest fruit crops I have observed in many years.

We removed 22 hollies during 2017, five of which were deciduous that included *Ilex verticillata* 'Earlibright' and two 'Golden Verboom' common winterberry. Supplemental plantings of both are scheduled in the near future to add back into the collection.

Five Japanese hollies were lost: two *I. crenata* 'Sentinel', one each of 'Kingsville Green Cushion', 'Black Beauty' and 'Foster No. 1'. These clones suffered severe cold temperature damage during the winter of 2013—2014 and did not adequately recover.

We removed our last *I. sugerokii* (Sugerok holly) and one specimen of *I. pedunculosa* (longstalk holly). Marginal status of the former in central Ohio was well known to us, but the failure to establish young seedlings of longstalk holly was a bit surprising as we have representations of this species dating back to 1968.

Six *I. opaca* (American holly) are no longer in the collection. 'Goldie' and 'Satyr Hill' succumbed to alleopathic effect of *Juglans nigra* (black walnut). Other American hollies deleted from the collection include 'Danny Allen', 'Farage', 'Helen Mitchell', and 'Sandy Hook #2'.

Twelve hollies were added to the collections at Holly Hill: six of these included *I. verticillata* 'Red Sprite'. We all know this common, commercially available winterberry and yet this cultivar is still "king of the hill" for its large fruit and fine compact habit. Three 'Roberta Case' Berry Heavy® Gold and Berry Poppins® common winterberry (*I. verticillata* 'FarrowBPop') rounded out the deciduous plantings. Two Portia Orton American hollies and one interesting hybrid of possumhaw and American

holly (*I. decidua* × *I. opaca*) were added in the spring of 2017. Lastly, we planted one accession of *I. colchica* (Black Sea holly) in hopes of re-establishing this species which grew fairly well for years at Holly Hill until the severe winter of 2013-2014 decimated the plantings.

Other Notes of Interest

All who have visited our holly collection know at once of its rather colossal size. As a young man, I used to manage this collection on a daily basis and most often on my own but that is no longer feasible for me. Yet, I am at liberty to make some curious observations when my other projects afford me the time to do so. I am grateful that plants cannot read hardiness zone maps for, if that were the case, our fine specimen of large gallberry (*I. coriacea*), a wild collected seedling from Carteret County, North Carolina, would have to "give up the ghost" immediately. And yet, this 2004 accession still flourishes, prompting me to travel to the coastal comfort of this banana belt and grow more companion seedlings.

It is also a good thing that we have had many friends and notable plantsmen helping us out in our quest to diversify our holly representation. For example, we have long sought to increase our plantings of smooth winterberry (*I. laevigata*) in hopes of adding female plants to our existing male plants. We now have many fine seedlings in the nursery from wild populations in Johnston County, N. Carolina. This population became known to me only through the guidance of a long time plant enthusiast, A. J. Bullard of Mt. Olive, N. Carolina. A. J. spent the better part of a day walking with us around some of his haunts.

Our *ex situ* plantings of longstalk holly (*I. longipes*) bring forth another good example of local botanists and plantsmen donating their time to assist us in growing rare species. I am indebted to Ray Head of Rutherfordton, North Carolina, for our first plants of this species, and to Wayne Webb from Superior Trees in Lee, Florida, for additional accessions. This most beautiful species is deserving of more recognition, and it is another plant that does not abide by human calculations and hardiness zone maps.

Respectfully submitted,

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