

## TYLER ARBORETUM

Media, Pennsylvania USDA Hardiness Zone 6

In Philadelphia, January and February were mild and warm, with the cold weather finally hitting us in March 2017. The whole month of January was five degrees above average, and February was the warmest on record, eight degrees above average. The cold weather came mid-March when a nor-easter brought 5" (12.7 cm) of sleet and snow and a temperature below 20°F (-6.66 °C) the night after the storm. For only the fifth time in history, a day in March did not rise above 30 °F (-1.11 °C). April brought warmth, again being the warmest recorded. May was full of rain, spread over many days, and July and August were mild with good rainfall. Our hot weather came at the end of September into October, giving us the hottest October in 140 years. The second week of November started at 70 °F (21.1 °C) but by Friday dropped to 22 °F (-5.55 °C) at night with a high of 39 °F (3.88 °C) during the day. While last year the large mass of *Ilex verticillata* by our Visitor Center was completely bare by the end of November, this year it was full of fruit and the leaves were still on its branches. The *I. opaca* was also full of fruit, but it was mostly still green with a hint of blush in mid-November. 'Sparkleberry' is always a reliable fruiter. A group of *I. × meserveae* 'Conapri' (Blue Princess®) put on a stunning colored fruit display in early November.

Tyler Arboretum's holly collection consists of 547 accessions representing 142 taxa. Our hollies make up the second largest collection at Tyler Arboretum after rhododendrons. *Ilex opaca* make up a significant portion of the collection. We have 165 *I. opaca* specimens and 44 different cultivars. We lost one taxon, *I. opaca* 'Allen' that had been growing in the Rhododendron Garden since 1958. In 2017, we added *I.* 'Homefire', a new taxon for us. We removed two *I. crenata* for the new Edible Garden project underway and removed the following seven *Ilex* due to declining condition: *I. decidua* 'Warren's Red' among an expanding patch of pawpaws, *I. glabra*, *I. glabra* 'Shamrock', *I. verticillata*. Two *I.* 'Harvest Red' were pruned back heavily when an overgrown area around the Pond Area was recently cleared.

Our collection contains eight of the Holly-of-the-Year cultivars. Many of these are among the best specimens in our collection. Their 2017 evaluations are described below.

2003: *I. opaca* 'Satyr Hill' – A consistently high-rated specimen. Excellent habit, excellent foliage, good fruit in December.

2005: *I. × koehneana* ‘Lassie’ – This specimen is in a protected site, though is starting to get crowded by other nearby hollies. Good habit, excellent foliage color, good fruiting.

2006: *I. × attenuata* ‘Sunny Foster’ – Excellent habit, excellent yellow-tipped foliage on sunny side. It stands out by the gate from the Parking Lot.

2007: *I. aquifolium* ‘Lewis’ – Excellent pyramidal form, with dense branching to the ground. Good foliage year, very dark green, good fruiting.

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

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

2013: *I. pedunculosa* – The specimen in the sun has light green foliage. The older specimen in the shade has been pruned back heavily and responded well with new growth. (Males).

2014: *I. × meserveae* ‘Mesgolg’ Golden Girl’™ – Two have good compact mounded form and dense foliage. The third, which is in a more exposed area, has sparser foliage and is leggy.

Alison Dame (Plant Recorder)