

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Washington, DC (USDA Hardiness Zone 7b)

2009 Annual Report

January 2009 was a fairly normal month with just a few nights with lows in the single digits. During the first week in January, we received about 2" of rain. Snowfall was minimal and we recorded about 1" near the end of the month. February turned out to be one of the driest February's on record with only .25" of moisture. There were several days with temperatures well above normal as well. On March 2nd, we received 8" of snowfall. This was the largest amount of snowfall we received. The snow melted rather quickly as the temperatures warmed up. By the end of the month there was concern that it was going to be a dry year. But that all changed in April. We received normal rainfall in April, followed by above average rainfall in May, June and July. By the end of July we had received almost half of our average rainfall for the year in three months. It was a steamy summer, with high temperatures in the upper 80's and low 90's. August and September rainfall was average with minimal effects from Hurricane Fred in early September. October and November were wet once again and on December 19th and 20th we received 19" of snow during a blizzard that broke records for December in the Mid-Atlantic section of the country. This was due to the strong El Nino which is expected to continue until the Spring of 2010. The snow in December caused considerable damage to the *Ilex* collection, resulting in the removal of just a few plants but will require major pruning of other plants.

There were very few additions and deletions to the collection during the past year. They are listed on the inventory that is attached. We are currently in the process of working on a new policy for the collection and once the policy is approved, we will determine what plants should be removed and what we will focus on adding to the collection in the next several years.

Several members of the Chesapeake Chapter of the Holly Society volunteered to work in the collection in the fall. They have also offered to work with us to evaluate the *Ilex* in the collection, focusing particularly on hybrids which were developed at the arboretum.

We have several Holly of the Year plants growing in the collection. The 2009 Holly of the Year, *Ilex* 'Scepter' does well in the mid-Atlantic region. There are two growing on the grounds of the arboretum. Both of them were transplanted from the Holly breeding nursery about 10 years ago. The original plant suffered after it was moved, but we were able to rejuvenate it by hat-racking it and it has turned into a fine plant. 'Scepter' looks good all year. We have several plantings of *Ilex verticillata* 'Red Sprite'. Berry production is not consistent year to year, and this may have to do with the location of the male pollinator. Otherwise, *Ilex verticillata* 'Red Sprite' grows well in this area and is a good size plant for smaller gardens.

Carole Bordelon
Supervisory Horticulturist