

## TEST HOLLY REPORT

Annual Meeting, October 22, 2011

The Holly Society of America Test Holly program was initiated by Harold Elmore in 1986 and continued under his leadership until 1999. During those years several species and/or cultivars of the Test Hollies were offered to attendees at each Annual Meeting. They were distributed with an evaluation sheet that was to be mailed to Mr. Elmore after a year and more. The principal focus was on hardiness and the distribution of new cultivars. Unfortunately, most people either misplaced their evaluation forms or forgot about the reporting component. Very few evaluations were returned (for example, 8 replies in 1988, 6 replies in 1993, and 0 replies in 1997) so no significant data could ever be compiled.

When Hal Elmore passed away, Leo Sandman managed the program from 1999 to 2007. Again, response was so poor during that time that many felt that the program should be discontinued. No data are available for 1999 through 2007.

The Holly Society is attempting to restore the Test Holly Program. At the 2008 meeting in Newark, Ohio, we decided to distribute the Test Hollies on the sessions day rather than at the final banquet as we had done previously. This was done to avoid confusion and haste and to enable record keeping. We listed recipients' names, email and home addresses, and the hollies that each member accepted. The evaluation sheets were attached to the plants. We realized that evaluation sheets became misplaced and that they would have to be mailed or emailed to recipients after a year.

We have continued to implement changes in the program. Other innovations are as follows: Annual Meeting attendees are now asked to agree to report on their Test Hollies if they accept them; permanent metal labels are firmly attached to each plant to avoid label loss and ID problems; only one holly is now selected to be a Test Holly; the evaluation sheets, which have been changed, (see sample) are mailed or emailed after one year (and also three years and five years later if response is sufficient) to each recipient; we prepare a spreadsheet to record all the information as it arrives (we are looking for more than hardiness information, as the evaluation form shows). Finally, we are trying to stress the importance of consistent, good first year care. Bill Kuhl, Leo Sandman, Jim Resch, Ray Head, Charles Anderson and others contributed many good ideas for the changes that are being made to the program.

The Test Holly Program has had many limitations. Among them: few plants and settings; few responses; little consistency on how the plants are handled during the first year; information in the evaluation responses is incomplete. The responses, however, have improved with time, and care suggestions and further changes to the evaluation forms will help.

Below is a list of the 2008-2011 Test Hollies and the information that we have gathered.

## 2008

### First year replies:

*Ilex x* 'Baltimore Blaze': 7 replies from 20 recipients,  
**1 dead:** z. 7a, no information given;  
**6 alive:** three in cold greenhouse z. 5b; one in ground z. 5b; one in cold greenhouse z. 6b; one in cold frame z. 7b.

*I. serrata* 'Longwood Firefall': 3 replies from 15 recipients  
**1 dead:** z. (7a) from fungus infection  
**2 alive:** one, greenhouse z. 6a; one, cold frame z. 7b.

*I. latifolia* 'Leah Bates': 12 replies from 19 recipients  
**4 dead:** 1, no information, z. 7; 1, pot in ground z. 7; 1, greenhouse, z. 7; 1 in ground, 6" mulch, z. 5b.  
**8 Alive:** 2, Greenhouse, z. 6a; 2, greenhouse, z. 5b; 1, sunroom 7b; 1, cold frame, z. 7b; 2, cold frame, z. 7a.

### Third year replies (this includes reports from members who did not reply after year 1)

*I. x* 'Baltimore Blaze': 7 replies  
**3 dead:** 1, protected area near house, pot too small, z. 6b; 1, in house, died outside following winter due to sun and wind, 5b; 1, outdoors, in pot, z. 6b.  
**4 alive:** 1, cold frame, z. 7a; 1, cold frame, z. 7b; 1, in ground, z. 6b; 1, in plastic film first year, protected spot, z. 5b.

*I. serrata* 'Longwood Firefall': 4 replies

**2 dead:** 1 due to winter exposure z. 5b; one, crushed by fallen tree, z. 6b.

**2 alive:** 1, potted and heeled in, z. 5b; 1 in ground, z. 7b.

*I. latifolia* 'Leah Bates':

8 replies

**4 dead:** 1, protected area near house, pot too small, z. 6b; 1, outside in pot z. 6b; 1, exposure, 2<sup>nd</sup> winter after 1<sup>st</sup> winter in house, z. 5b; 1 crushed by fallen tree, z. 6b.

**4 alive:** 1 in ground, mulch, z. 7; 1, unprotected area, in ground, z. 6b; 1 in ground, shady location, z. 7a.

**2009:**

### First year replies

*I. verticillata* 'Chickemmoo': 7 replies from 15 recipients

**1 dead:** garage, z. 7a

**6 alive:** 1, cold frame, z. 7b; 1, cold frame, z. 6a; 1, repotted, placed in raised bed, z. 7a; 1, greenhouse, z. 6a; 1, in ground, leaf mulch, z. 6a; 1, greenhouse, wood chips, z. 6b

*I. (cornuta x pernyi)* 'Hugger': 9 replies from 15 recipients

**1 dead:** cold frame, sheltered, z. 6a

**8 alive:** 2, cold frame, z. 7a; 1, cold frame, z. 6a; 1, greenhouse, z. 7; 1, greenhouse, pine mulch, z. 6a; 1, in ground, leaf mulch, z. 6a; 1, cold garage, z. 7a; 1, greenhouse, mulch, z. 6b;

*I. x attenuata* 'Bronze Beauty': 10 replies from 18 recipients

**5 dead:** 1, root system too small, pot in ground, hard winter, z. 6b; 1, late freeze; 1, lack of water, in ground, 2" mulch, z. 6a; 1, in unheated garage, z. 7a; 1, cold frame, wood chips, winter kill z. 6a.

**5 alive:** 1, uncovered cold frame, z. 6b; 1, greenhouse, z. 7; 1, cold frame, z. 6a; 1, greenhouse, mulch, z. 6b; 1, cold frame, repotted, z. 7a

*I. (cornuta x ciliospinosa)* B51517 (= A51517):

7 replies from 8 recipients

**2 dead:** 1, unheated garage, z. 7a; 1, greenhouse, deer damage, z. 6a;

**5 alive:** 1, repotted, cold frame, z. 7a; 1, greenhouse, no mulch, z. 7; one, in ground, leaf mulch, z. 6a; 1, in ground, full sun, no mulch, z. 7; 1, cold frame, z. 6a.

**2010:**

### **First year replies**

*I. (aquifolium x cornuta)* 'Sled Run':

12 replies from 15 recipients

**5 dead:** 1, cold frame, inadequate water during heat spell, z. 7a; one, in 1 gal. pot under evergreen tree, z. 7b; 1, sheltered in woods, killed by herbicide z. 6b; 1, in pot outside, died in summer from heat and little water, z. 7.

**7 alive:** 1, greenhouse, z. 7a; 1, greenhouse, z. 5a; 1, cold frame, did well in summer heat, z. 7; 1, outside in pot, mulch, insulated by snow cover, z. 7a; 1, cold frame, z. 7a; 1, cold frame, still in pot, z. 6b; 1, pot in ground, slug damage, mulch, high summer temperatures, z. 7a.

When this information was reviewed, it was clear that a major problem in Test Holly first year survival is related more to the type of first year care than to the hardiness zone.

### **FIRST YEAR CARE GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines, which may produce more reliable data in the future, will help ensure correct care of the Test Hollies.

- Do not expose your young plant to wind or direct sun during its first year.
- Place the holly in a semi-shaded or filtered shade position if you decide to plant it in the ground the first winter.

- Supply adequate water. Remember that evergreen hollies do not wilt so water stress is not quickly evident. The root systems are small and confined and cannot gather sufficient water if you do not supply it. If a pot dries up, immediately soak it in a container of water to saturate the soil rather than sprinkle the water from the top. Do not underestimate the need for water on hot days as well as cold ones. If you have planted the holly in the ground, give it a thorough soaking when you plant it and continue to water it when the ground is not frozen. In unusually hot summers the holly will survive if watered adequately.
- If the holly is to be kept in a pot all winter (in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame), repot it to a larger pot if the holly seems to be root-bound or if there is a risk that the roots might freeze.
- Place the Test Holly in: **1)** an unheated greenhouse or cold frame or, if you do not have access to these, **2)** remove the holly from its pot and plant it in the ground in a protected spot, surrounded by a wire cage or a burlap bag filled with straw, mulch, or chopped leaves once temperatures become very low. Mulch the holly liberally.
- Do not leave a potted holly above ground in a “protected” spot; temperature extremes are frequent and unpredictable and adequate water will probably become a problem.
- Do not keep the holly over the winter in a heated home, a warm garage, or a heated greenhouse. The holly needs to acclimate to cold conditions.
- The benefits of antidessicants are debatable; do not rely on them.
- Keep the holly close enough to your house so that watering and monitoring it is not an inconvenience.
- Keep a record of the name of the holly and where you have placed it.

If we follow these guidelines we may end up with more live hollies and more reliable data.

Ann Farnham

# HOLLY SOCIETY OF AMERICA

## Nationwide Holly Test Distributed \_\_\_\_\_

Cultivar Name: *Ilex* \_\_\_\_\_

HSA Registration:

Plants by:

Cooperator : Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

USDA Hardiness Zone \_\_\_\_\_

Test Planting:

Location (if different from above) \_\_\_\_\_

First winter: In the ground?

Protection?

Greenhouse?

Cold frame?

Other?

Is the plant alive?

If not, why do you think it died?

Site Characteristics: (Exposure to wind, sun, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Please include deer damage, disease, insects, blooming time, growth rate and pollinators as well as other relevant information in the following (add information on another page if necessary):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date Planted:

Soil Type: (ex: clay, loam, sandy, other)

Elevation:

Mulch type

Depth of Mulch:

First Year Observations: (lowest temperature, hottest temperature, fertilization, watering, etc.; ( Please use another page if necessary)

Please make a copy of this data sheet and send to:

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