

3-15 *Ilex opaca* 'Liberty Belle'

Female

Registered: February 5, 2015

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The selection originated as a chance seedling, found in the nursery in Baltimore County in 1995. Ms. Hunter moved the taxa to her relocated nursery in Felton, Pennsylvania and has observed the tree since 1997, when it was propagated, grown on and distributed to the trade, by Heartwood Nursery.

The evergreen tree, nearly 20 years old, has grown into a large conical specimen, nearly 6.1 m (20 ft) tall, with a spread of 1.5 m (5 ft) and a herringbone branching habit. The largest leaves are typical, but small for the species, simple, coriaceous, glabrous, 3.8 cm (1 1/2 in) by 3.1 cm (1 3/16 in) wide, ovate in outline, with an acuminate leaf tip and a rounded base. Leaf margins are spinose, with up to five small spines to 2 mm (1/16 in) per side and a petiole to 5 mm (3/16 in). Average yearly growth has been measured at 3.1 dm (12 in). Leaf color is green, Green Group 138 B on the Royal Hort. Soc. Colour Chart, 1995. Fruits are globose, red, Red Group 44B, up to 8 mm (5/16 in) in diameter, with peduncles to 5 mm (3/16 in).

Plants have been grown and sold to the trade at Heartwood Nursery in Pennsylvania since 1997. Selection was based on smaller leaves for the species, dark red persistent fruit, constant, heavy fruit set and a fast growth habit. The cultivar name is a result of John Phillip Sousa's "Liberty Bell March", which the namer plays professionally on her piccolo. The cultivar name has an "e" added to the bell, making the spelling *Ilex opaca* 'Liberty Belle', to signify the cultivar is female. Hardiness is rated at zone 5 on the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map of 1990.

Voucher specimens are on deposit in the herbarium of the U.S. National Arboretum (NA), Washington, D.C. 20002.