



NEW GARDEN
LANDSCAPING & NURSERY

newgarden.com
email:info@newgarden.com

New Garden Village
5572 Garden Village Way
Greensboro, NC 27410
phone: 336-665-0291

New Garden Gazebo
3811 Lawndale Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27455
phone: 336-288-8893

Shrub Hollies

Hollies are a fairly diverse group of shrubs and trees adaptable to a wide variety of uses and site conditions. Hedges, foundation plantings, screens, or specimen planting are just a few of the ways these plants may be used. Most hollies will do well in full sun to light-to-moderate shade and will tolerate most soil conditions. This handout is devoted to the Shrub-Sized Hollies. A companion handout is available for the Tree-Sized Hollies.

The Shrub-Sized Hollies include the following plants.

JAPANESE HOLLIES, *Ilex crenata* varieties, prove that not all hollies have pointy leaves and red berries. These hollies have small, rounded leaves and, if they produce fruit, it is small bluish berries that are usually hidden by the leaves. Somewhat slow-growing, they include:

COMPACTA: Named for its dense, tight habit and not its size. Reaching about 6 feet high and roughly 4 feet wide, this one has dark green leaves and a compact, globose outline. Young stems (and new growth on older branches) have a purple-black color (a key for identification). Interestingly, there are several "strains" of compacta on the market, each with a slightly different leaf texture but similar growth characteristics.

GREEN LUSTER: Somewhat looser in habit and coarser in texture, Green Luster has dark, shiny green leaves and grows to about 3 feet high and wide.

HELLERI: This is a dwarf, mounded, compact form with small, medium green leaves that create a soft-textured appearance. Reaches about 3 feet high and 4 feet wide.

HOOGENDORN: Reaches 2 ½ or 3 feet tall and wider with dark green, somewhat oval-shaped leaves about ¾" long. Hoogendorn's soft texture more closely resembles that of Boxwood than that of any of the other hollies.

SKY PENCIL: Grows to about 6-8 feet high and up to 2 feet wide with dark green leaves and very upright branches. Very formal in appearance, Sky Pencil makes a nice narrow hedge or specimen planting. Grows faster than most of the Japanese hollies.

SOFT TOUCH: As the name implies, this one has a very soft texture and appearance – again with glossy, dark green leaves. Reaches 2 feet high and 3 feet wide and may prove superior to Helleri.

STEEDS: Has an upright, slightly pyramidal habit and reaches about 8 feet tall and 3 ½ to 4 feet wide. Lustrous dark green and somewhat oval leaves and a fairly dense character make Steeds a good choice for screens or tall hedges.

DWARF YAUPON - Listed here because of its similarity to the Japanese hollies, Dwarf Yaupon, *Ilex vomitoria*, has quite small medium green leaves and reaches 3-4 feet by 3-4 feet. Labeled either 'Schillings' or 'Stokes' dwarf (one and the same), this shrub is quite hardy. It's also fairly tolerant of most conditions, including wet and dry soils. Salt-tolerant, Dwarf Yaupon per-

(Continued on page 2)



Japanese Holly, *Ilex crenata*



Shrub Hollies cont.

(Continued from page 1)

forms quite well at the North Carolina coast.

CHINESE HOLLIES, *Ilex cornuta* varieties, are quite adaptable and tolerant of heat and drought as well as fairly wet conditions. Fruiting varieties will flower and produce berries even in considerable shade. As a group, these plants are tolerant of even heavy pruning.

BURFORD is a dense, rounded shrub 10-12 feet tall and wide (or somewhat larger), with lustrous dark green leaves 2-3" long that usually have one terminal spine (one prickly point at the end of the leaf). Small, fragrant white flowers are produced in abundance in April-May, followed by a normally heavy set of orange-red berries in fall. This holly is very popular and is most often pruned to resemble a small tree by removing the lower branches. Does not need a separate pollinator to flower and produce fruit.

CARISSA reaches about 3-4 feet high and 4-6 feet wide, with waxy dark green leaves about 2-3" long and 1 ½" wide. This shrub is very adaptable and tolerant of most conditions. Carissa normally produces no fruit. Often used in foundation plantings or as a low hedge or mass.

DWARF BURFORD is a half-sized version of the Burford Holly with slightly smaller leaves. The dwarf (5-6') variety does not fruit as heavily and its berries are darker red, but the two are similar in most other respects. Great for taller foundation plantings, hedges, screens, or as an ever-green backdrop for deciduous flowering plants.

NEEDLEPOINT has an upright but broadly conical shape that may approach 10 feet high and slightly less wide. Its leaves are very similar to Dwarf Burford, a fact that can cause confusion in the nursery, but Needlepoint produces abundant, vivid red berries about ½" in diameter. Best for screening, massing, grouping, or as a large foundation plant in the proper location.

INKBERRY HOLLIES *Ilex glabra* Clearly the star of this species is SHAMROCK a very soft-textured (both visually and to the touch) shrub of about 4-6 feet tall and 2 ½ - 3 feet wide. Light green new foliage accents the darker mature leaves in spring. May produce small black fruit. Good for foundations, hedges, masses, or accent plants.

The RED HOLLIES include five recently introduced hybrids of upright-pyramidal growth and prominently-spined dark green leaves. New foliage emerges reddish-purple, giving this group its name. All of these hybrids are female, but early trials failed to produce berries, so their fruit production has yet to be determined.

CARDINAL has foliage similar to 'Mary Nell,' a pyramidal habit, and reaches 14 feet high and 8 feet wide.



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Shrub Hollies cont.

FESTIVE has the spiniest leaf of the group, extremely lustrous dark green foliage, and a broad, more compact pyramidal habit. Reaches 12 feet tall and 8 feet wide.

OAK LEAF is the fastest grower of the group and reaches about 14 feet high and 8 feet wide. Its large, elongated leaves somewhat resemble those of an oak.

ROBIN produces leaves similar to 'Nellie Stevens' and again reaches 14 feet high by 8 feet wide.

The MESERVE HYBRIDS are named for Mrs. F. Leighton Meserve, who won awards for the development of new holly hybrids in the 1950s. In the south, these hybrids probably maintain their truest color if provided some shade during the afternoon. Otherwise, they seem to perform quite well in this area.

BLUE BOY is a large shrub reaching 10-15 feet high and nearly as wide, with lustrous, dark, finely serrated bluish green leaves. As you might suspect, this is the male pollinator for the next variety.

BLUE GIRL grows smaller, about 8-10 feet high and 6-8 feet wide, with an upright pyramidal outline. In addition to its bluish-green foliage, Blue Girl has bright red berries.

BLUE PRINCESS has darker bluish green foliage and is broad and shrubby, reaching 15 feet high and 10 feet wide. 'Princess' produces abundant dark red berries.

BLUE PRINCE has leathery dark bluish green foliage and grows 8-12 feet high but can be pruned into any shape.

CHINA GIRL has deep, lustrous green foliage (though not as dark as the 'Blue' series) and deep red fruits. This variety is very heat tolerant and may reach 10 feet tall and wide.

CHINA BOY is the pollinator for China Girl, reaches nearly the same size with a compact, mounded form. This variety is both heat and cold tolerant.

LITTLE RASCAL, similar to the Meserve hybrids, is a male form that reaches only 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide. Its dense, compact habit is accented by a deep purple winter color. Good pollinator.



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