



## *Ilex cassine* Dahoon Holly<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Attractive when tightly clipped into a tall screen or allowed to grow naturally into its single-trunked, small tree form, Dahoon Holly is ideal for a variety of landscape settings (Fig. 1). Capable of reaching 40 feet in height, Dahoon Holly is usually seen at a height of 20 to 30 feet with an 8 to 12-foot spread. The smooth, supple, shiny dark green, evergreen leaves, two to three inches long, have just a few serrations near the tip. Possessing male and female flowers on separate plants, at least two Dahoon Hollies (male and female) must be planted in the landscape to ensure production of the brilliant red berries in fall and winter. The berries serve as an excellent food source for wildlife but are far less prevalent than on East Palatka or Fosters Holly.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ilex cassine*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-lecks kuh-SIGH-nee

**Common name(s):** Dahoon Holly

**Family:** *Aquifoliaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; screen; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil,

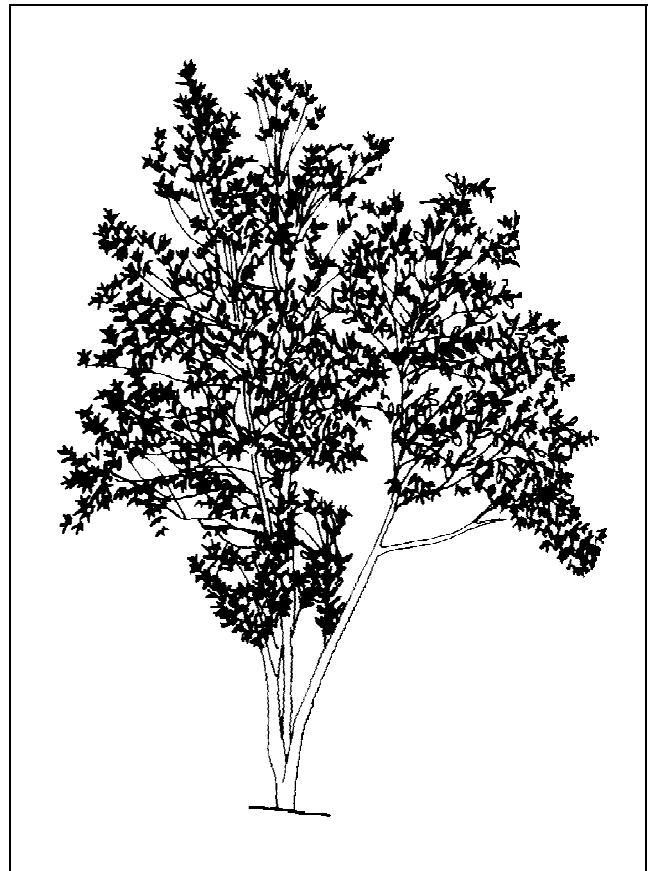


Figure 1. Middle-aged Dahoon Holly.

and/or drought are common

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-299, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet  
**Spread:** 8 to 12 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** oval; pyramidal  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire; serrate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** < .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red; yellow  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

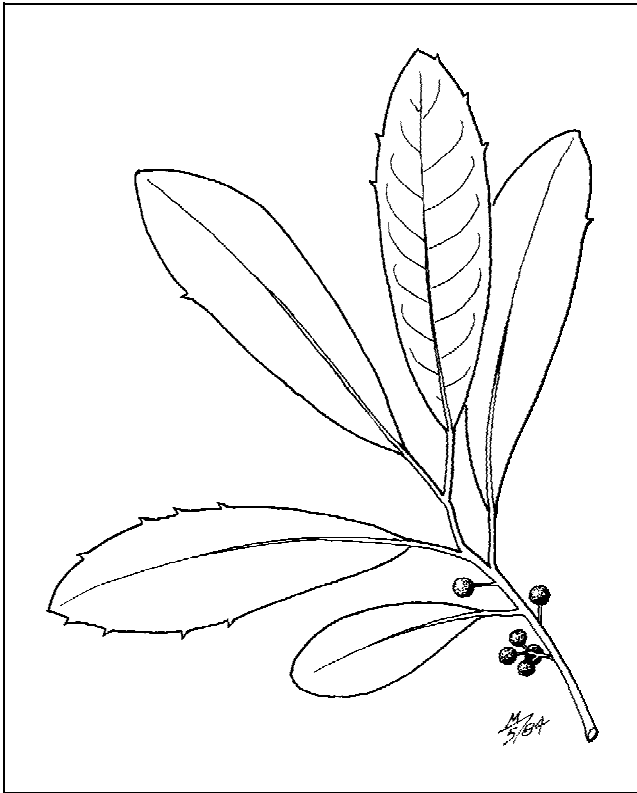


Figure 3. Foliage of Dahoon Holly.

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Growing well in full sun to partial shade, Dahoon Holly does best on moist soils since the wet, boggy soils of swamps is its native environment. Dahoon Holly can tolerate drier locations with some watering, but often has a thin crown in this environment. It is not recommended in the southern part of its range in a dry, exposed site unless irrigation is provided. It lends itself well to use as a specimen or street tree, and is ideal for naturalizing in moist locations. Little pruning is needed to create a well-structured, strong tree. It appears to adapt well to the confined spaces of urban and downtown landscapes and is tolerant of some salt spray. The crown is fuller in full sun.

*Ilex cassine* var. *angustifolia*, Alabama Dahoon, has narrower, more linear leaves than the species and more abundant but smaller berries. *Ilex myrtifolia* has smaller leaves and fruit, and its cultivar 'Loweii' has yellow berries and dark green foliage.

Propagation is by seeds, which germinate in one year, or by cuttings. Cuttings are preferred since they give plants of a known sex and also root easily.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. A twig gall sometimes forms in response to a fungus infection. Mites can infest foliage on trees planted on dry sites.