



## *Ilex x attenuata* 'Savannah' Savannah Holly<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Savannah Holly is a beautifully shaped tree, with a narrow, open pyramidal to columnar form (Fig. 1). A 35-foot-tall tree can be eight feet wide in 40 years, indicating a moderate growth rate. The spiny, dull, dark green leaves have wavy margins and are accented in fall with heavy clusters of red berries which persist throughout the fall and winter. Male and female flowers appear on separate trees and must be located in the same neighborhood to ensure production of berries. Many nurserymen propagate from female trees so most nursery trees have berries. Many trees are grown with a central trunk and skinny lateral branches, although some nurseries offer those with several upright trunks growing straight up through the crown. Many trees are sheared in the nursery to create more branches and a fuller canopy than will be seen several years after planting.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ilex x attenuata* 'Savannah'

**Pronunciation:** EYE-lecks x uh-ten-yoo-AY-tuh

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

**Family:** *Aquifoliaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size);

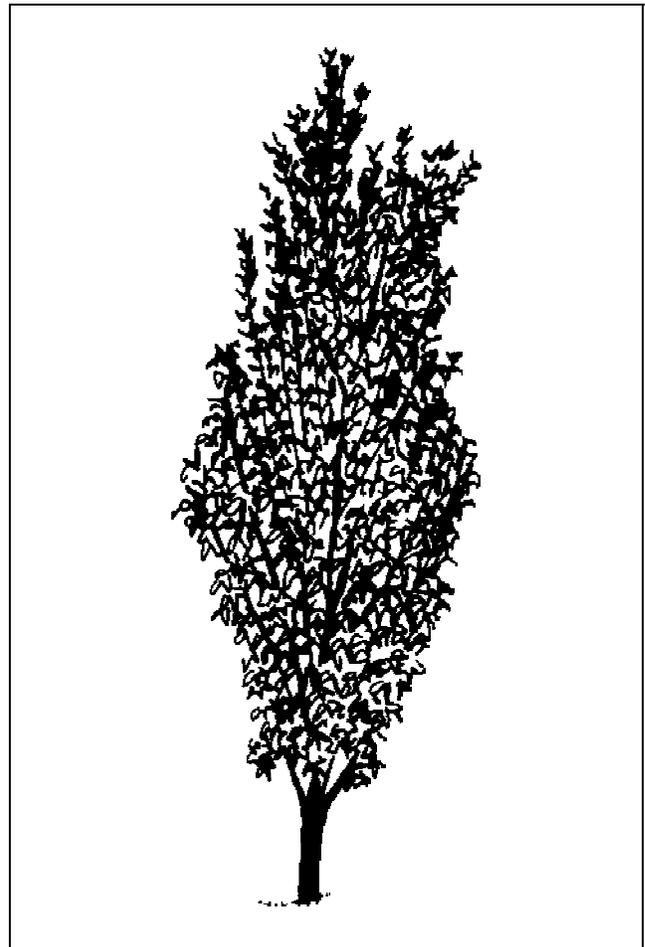


Figure 1. Middle-aged Savannah Holly.

narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** columnar

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

### 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

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** pectinate; spiny; terminal spine

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

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

**Breakage:** resistant

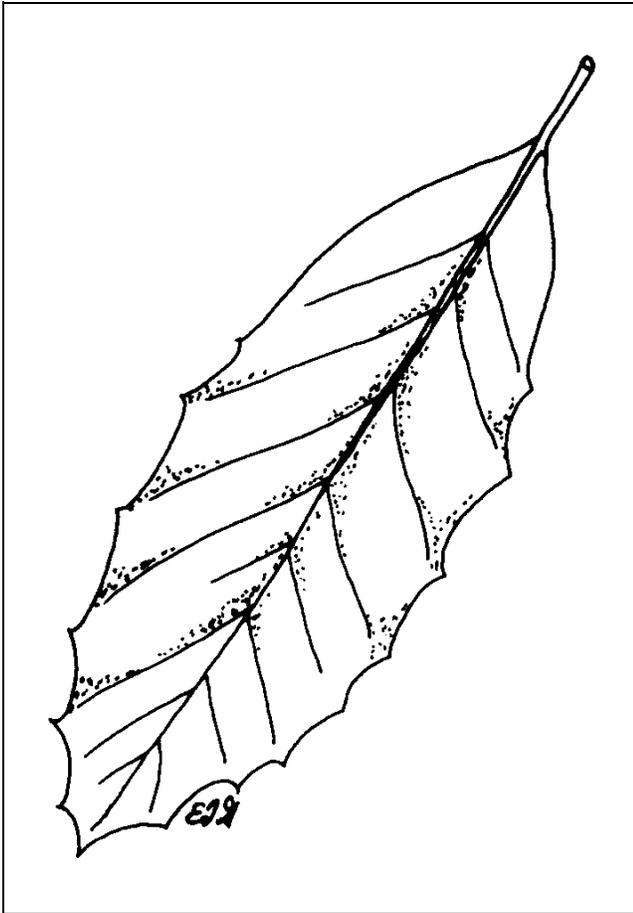


Figure 3. Foliage of Savannah Holly.

**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; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

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

**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

**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

Savannah Holly is ideal for use as a street tree, framing tree, specimen, or barrier planting. There are better screens available such as Nellie R. Stevens Holly and Foster's Holly which are denser than the open-canopied Savannah Holly. Roots are rarely invasive due to their great number and relatively small diameter. This native tree is ideal for naturalizing on moist, slightly acid soils, and the fruit is very attractive to wildlife, serving as an excellent food source.

A popular landscape plant, this broad-leaved evergreen has served a variety of uses through the years. The American Indians used preserved Holly berries as decorative buttons and were much sought after by other tribes who bartered for them. The wood has been used for making canes, scroll work and furniture, and has even been substituted for ebony in inlay work when stained black.

Growing well in full sun to partial shade, Savannah Holly should be located on fertile, well-drained but moist, slightly acid soils. Berry production is best in full sun. Savannah Holly foliage thins slightly during drought but insect and disease infestations are usually minimal.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

### Pests

Savannah Holly is usually pest-free.

Holly leaf miner larvae mines out the leaf middle leaving yellow or brown trails.

Scales of various types may infest Holly.

Spider mites cause discoloration and speckling of Holly foliage.

### Diseases

Savannah Holly is not normally infected with disease. Galls and witches broom are serious problems for many trees growing in central Florida. Trees often die when they become infested.

Tar spot may occasionally cause small yellow spots on the leaves in early summer. Eventually the spots turn reddish brown with narrow yellow borders.

Leaves may not drop prematurely but the infected areas drop out leaving holes in the leaves. Gather up and destroy badly infected leaves.

Many different fungi cause leaf spots on Holly. Reduce the injury caused by leaf spots by keeping trees healthy. Dispose of diseased leaves.

Cankers caused by several different fungi lead to sunken areas on stems and plant dieback. Keep trees healthy and prune out infected branches.

Spine spot is small gray spots with purple margins and is caused by spines of one leaf puncturing an adjacent leaf.

Chlorosis symptoms are light green or yellowish leaves with darker green veins. This problem is due to a high pH leading to iron deficiency. Use acidifying fertilizers and sulfur to bring down the pH. Sprays of iron chelate will green up plants.

Purple blotches on the leaves are caused by some environmental factor such as nutrient deficiencies, drought, and winter injury.