



Ilex latifolia Lusterleaf Holly¹

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INTRODUCTION

This broad-leaved, evergreen tree can reach 40 feet in height with a 20 to 25-foot spread but is usually seen at half that size (Fig. 1). The six-inch-long, glossy dark green, leathery leaves have serrate margins and are unusually coarse-textured and large for a Holly. The 0.25-inch-thick, newly emerging green shoots add to the coarseness of this attractive tree. New shoots droop under the weight of the emerging leaves creating a full-crowned, round or slightly pyramidal canopy. The inconspicuous, yellowish-white spring flowers are followed by a profusion of small, brick red berries (on female plants), appearing in dense clusters, and persisting on the plants throughout the winter. Both male and female plants must be planted to ensure production of the berries.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ilex latifolia*

Pronunciation: EYE-lecks lat-ih-FOLE-ee-uh

Common name(s): Lusterleaf Holly

Family: *Aquifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; 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; near a deck or patio; screen; small parking lot islands (< 100



Figure 1. Young Lusterleaf Holly.

square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 25 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; pyramidal
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: medium
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate; spiny
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; 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

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
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

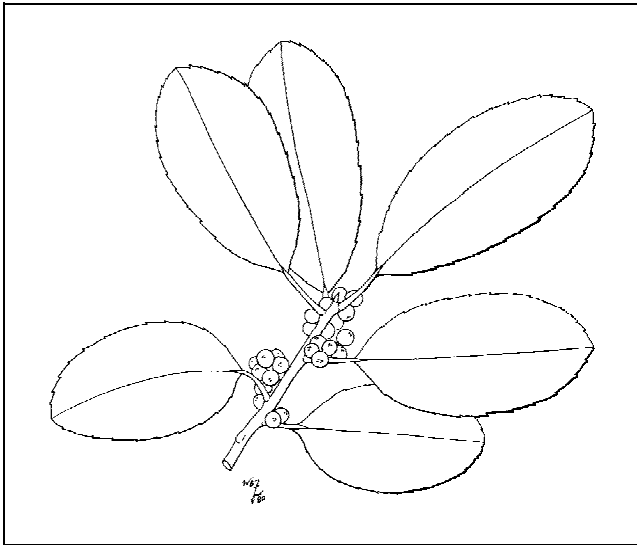


Figure 3. Foliage of Lusterleaf Holly.

Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: stout; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

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: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Lusterleaf Holly can be clipped or can grow on its own into a dense screen when located in bright light, but has a more open crown in shade. This makes a nice background plant in a shrub border in a large landscape due to the dark green foliage. Other plants contrast well when planted in front of it. Nurseries

can train the plant into a multistemmed specimen or prune it to develop a single trunk for patio or street tree use.

Lusterleaf Holly looks its best if planted in an area receiving less than all-day sun and strong winds. Some shading in the afternoon would be fine. Not for exposed, windy, dry, full-sun areas, this Holly does well in shaded locations. Fertile, well-drained but moisture-retentive soils are best for this handsome evergreen. Plants will require only occasional pruning to maintain form and size and they can be espaliered on a wall or fence quite easily. The bold foliage of Lusterleaf Holly contrasts well with other plants and it is also a striking specimen planting on its own. Clear the inner portions of the branches of foliage and small twigs and light the tree at night from below to create a nice night-time specimen.

The cultivar 'Wirt L. Winn' is known for its excellent form and foliage color.

Propagation is difficult. Hardwood cuttings taken in fall and winter sometimes root. Seeds can take several years to germinate. Plants are sometimes grafted onto *Ilex opaca* seedlings.

Pests and Diseases

There is a caterpillar which occasionally chews holes in the leaves.