



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Ilex glabra*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This upright, clump-forming, evergreen shrub is valued for its foliage and fruits. The lustrous, dark green leaves may have a few obtuse teeth toward the leaf apex or they may have entire margins. They are obovate to oblanceolate in shape and may reach a length of 3/4 to 2 inches. Gallberry becomes somewhat open with age and often loses its small lower branches. Female plants have berry-like, black drupes that occur from September to May of the following year. These 6- to 8-foot-tall plants are especially valuable to birds for their persistent fruits and branch structures. The flowers of *Ilex glabra* appear in May, and the staminate and pistillate flowers occur on separate plants. The female flowers are solitary, and the male flowers are borne on a stalk consisting of 3 or more flowers. Both sexes of flowers have creamy white petals and are inconspicuous.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ilex glabra*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-lecks GLAY-bruh

**Common name(s):** Inkberry, Gallberry

**Family:** *Aquifoliaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 10A (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** reclamation plant; specimen; screen; foundation; mass planting

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### Description

**Height:** 6 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** vase shape; oval

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

#### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** black  
**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk  
**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Gallberry is excellent when used in mass plantings and as naturalizing material. It has been utilized as a hedge, foundation plant and accent plant. It makes a poor hedge because it thins toward the bottom.

*Ilex glabra* prefers a full sun to partial shade location in the landscape and moist, acid soils; high pH soils should be avoided. Older plants may be renewed by heavy pruning.

Cultivars include: ‘Compacta’, dwarf female clone, tighter branching and foliage than species, grows 4 to 6 feet high, becomes leggy at base; ‘Georgia Wine’, turns burgundy during the winter; ‘Ivory Queen’ and ‘Leucocarpa’, white fruited

forms, grow 6 to 8 feet high; 'Nigra', purplish foliage in winter; 'Nordic', compact rounded form, grows 3 to 4 feet tall, cold hardy, needs pruning to keep it dense; 'Shamrock', compact form, slower growing than species, leaves smaller and flat; 'Steed', compact form; 'Squat', compact form.

Propagate the Gallberry by seed, layering, cuttings, and grafting.

#### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Leaf spot, scales, and spittle bugs have been observed on this plant.