Introduction

With growth habits available in weeping or prostrate forms depending upon cultivar, Miniature Holly can serve a variety of landscape uses (Fig. 1). Their small size makes them well suited for planting along a foundation. The fine texture contrasts nicely with medium and coarse-textured, taller shrubs. Their dense growth habit allows them to “fill in” in front of taller shrubs which may have become thin at the bottom. The glossy green foliage resembles small holly leaves, and the plants are decorated throughout the year with light pink, delicate, ruffled blossoms in spring and summer and small, bright red cherries in fall and winter.

General Information

Scientific name: Malpighia coccigera
Pronunciation: mal-PIG-ee-uh kock-SIDGE-juh-ruh
Common name(s): Miniature Holly, Singapore Holly
Family: Malpighiaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: ground cover; mass planting; border; container or above-ground planter; foundation; edging
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Figure 1. Miniature Holly.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
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

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

October 1999
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Miniature Holly does best in partial shade on fertile, nematode-free soil. Plants should be watered faithfully and fertilized during the growing season. Some plants may require light pruning to maintain a uniform appearance but the crowns of adjacent Miniature Hollies usually mound together in a pleasing, billowing fashion. Plant on three to four foot centers for the best groundcover or mass planting effect.

There is a cultivar available with variegated foliage.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Problems include nematodes, scale, and mites.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.