



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

***Malpighia coccigera*¹**

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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-jer-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

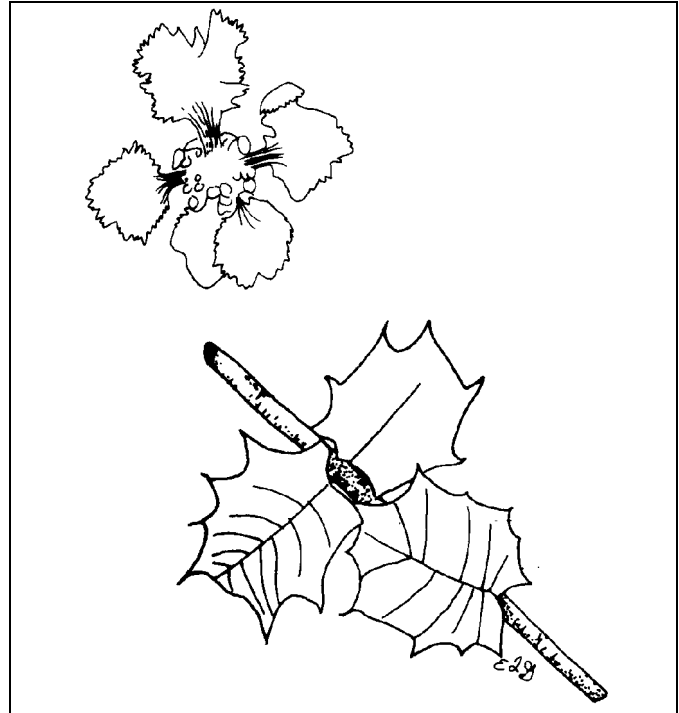


Figure 1. Miniature Holly.

Spread: 2 to 5 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

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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

Flower

- Flower color:** pink
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** red
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and 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

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.