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Holly Selection and Care in North Texas

Hollies are one of the most versatile plants in the North Texas landscape! Hollies come in a wide array of sizes and textures, and they are adaptable to a range of different sun exposures, making them truly a "go-to" plant for challenging areas where other plants may be difficult to grow. This handout will demonstrate how to properly install and care for these wonderful plants, and help you decide which holly is just right for your landscape needs.

Selecting and Planting a Holly

First, select the variety of holly based upon your sun exposure. The majority of the hollies can be planted in a wide range of sun exposures from full sun to mostly shade (any exceptions will be noted below). Then select a type appropriate in size for the space to be planted. Choose one which will reach the size you desire without requiring constant heavy pruning to keep the plant in bounds.

Dig a hole that is as deep as the root ball of your new shrub and twice as wide. Place the shrub in the hole so that the bottom of the root ball is on firm soil and back-fill the hole with a mixture of ½ compost/expanded shale and ½ native soil. When finished planting, add a 2" layer of mulch over the root ball and water.

Maintaining a Holly

Hollies are acid-loving plants which are so tough that many of them thrive in our alkaline North Texas clays. Feed hollies three times a year with acid-forming fertilizers w/iron, such as our **Covington's Tree & Shrub**. This fertilizer has everything needed to keep your hollies healthy. For organic maintenance programs, use a generous amount of greensand, added to fertilizations, to provide the iron hollies need in order to stay a nice deep green.

Holly Varieties

Hollies come in such a range of textures and sizes that there is almost always a holly perfectly suited for any area. The following list describes each holly variety by name, average dimensions, and notable features. We've had over 45 varieties of holly through the years at Covington's and these are our current favorite performers.

Berry Notes: Some hollies are self-fruitful, others simply pollinate so well in our area that no special pollinator is needed or listed (there are plenty "in the neighborhood"). Hollies that need an unusual pollinator to make berries, or don't produce berries, are noted.

Acadiana: 12-14' T x 6-8' W, Upright, pyramidal habit and deeply serrated leaves. New growth is deep red turning dark green. Orange-red berries in summer lasting in to fall and winter.

Dwarf Burford: 4-6' T x 4-6' W, easily maintained at 3-4', one of our most durable plants for North Texas. All Dwarf Burford Holly will berry. An excellent hedge selection.

Carissa: 3-4' T x 3-4' W, low rounded shape. Very dense growth, has one sharp point per leaf. No berries.

Christmas Jewel: 10' T x 6-8'W, dense pyramidal habit, narrow dark green shiny leaves, apple red berries in the fall.

Eagleston: 15-20+ T x 15' W, upright. A specific cultivar of 'Savannah' holly, can be used interchangeably for this plant. Red berries, good for attracting birds. Can be grown as large shrub or pruned into a small tree.

East Palatka: 15-20' T x 15' W, an American holly. Red berries in winter, oval leaves, no sharp points. Can be grown as large shrub or pruned into a small tree.

Liberty: 12-15' T x 8' W, dense pyramidal shrub with deeply serrated leaves and clusters of bright red berries.

Mary Nell: 15-20' T x 10' W, saw-toothed leaf, good berry production winter into spring. Can be grown as large pyramidal shrub or pruned into a small tree.

Micron: 1-2' T x 2-3' W, new and very compact variety with tiny leaves and tight mounding growth habit.

Needlepoint: 8-10' T x 10-12' W, narrow, flat leaf with one point. Outstanding hedge or screen holly, excellent berry production.

Nellie R. Stevens: 15-20' T x 10' W, large dark green leaves, exceptional berry production, one of the most vigorous hollies for planting in this area. Excellent as a screen or small ornamental tree.

Oak Leaf or Oakland: 10-12' T x 8' W, pyramidal and upright, leaves resemble oak leaf shape, self-fruitful berry producer.

Possum Haw: 8-15' T x 8-15' W, a deciduous holly. We usually carry the 'Warren's Red' variety, a female holly with rich red berries during the winter. Red berries are extremely noticeable since the leaves drop to show them off! It will pollinate with a variety of prevalent local hollies, so no special pollinator is needed. For berry production, make sure you have 'Warren's Red' or a female plant if using another type of this holly.

Robin: 15-20' T x 12-15' W, pyramidal shaped shrub with an abundance of brilliant red new growth in spring and showy red berries in fall.

Savannah: 15-20' T x 15' W, light green foliage forms loosely pyramidal upright shrub. Red berries in summer persist through winter.

Yaupon (Dwarf): 4' T x 4' W, tightly rounded. No points on the leaves, a super dense and extremely easy landscape shrub in our area! Can be maintained at any size. No berries.

Yaupon (Upright, multiple cultivars): 10-15' T x 10-15' W. Most yaupon hollies are trained as a small tree-form, but they're easily trimmed to nearly any size you wish. Yaupon hollies have male and female plants—the female hollies will berry easily in our area, but males will not. When yaupons are container-grown, they are generally done so from cuttings off of female yaupon hollies, and will all be female. Field-grown yaupons can be either, so look for berries when purchasing (if there is even one, you know the plant is definitely female).

Yaupon (Weeping): 8-10' T x 6-8' W, good berry production. Large shrub or small tree with weeping growth habit. Unique landscape accent.