MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK•EASTERN SHORE

Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 200

Chinese Hollies

Chinese hollies, (Ilex cornuta), are quickly becoming one of the most popular evergreens in landscape plantings. Their popularity is primarily due to their wide variation in the shape and color of the foliage, their habit of growth, and their red or yellow fruit. There are approximately 60 varieties of Chinese hollies; however, only a few of these are grown commercially.

Figure 1. Chinese hollies used as a hedge in a landscape

Their coarse, glossy-green foliage and symmetrical habit of growth make them excellent for foundation or garden plantings. Some of the dense, compact varieties can be used as hedges, while the heavy fruiting varieties are most effective when used as specimen plants.

The leaves of Chinese hollies are lustrous, green and leathery. Depending on the varieties, the margins of each leaf may have from 1 to 7 spines pointing up or down. Since these spines are sharp, the plant should be handled carefully. The leaves are generally quadrangular, from 1½ to 5 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide.

Berries of Chinese hollies, borne in clusters, are either red, orange-red, or yellow and are only on female plants. In order to insure a good production, it is important that a male plant be planted in the vicinity of female plants. One male plant will produce a sufficient amount of pollen to pollinate female plants within a 500-foot radius.

Varieties

The following are some of the varieties of Chinese hollies that can be grown in Maryland. The approximate height and spread given with each variety are measurements taken from 30- to 40-year old plants that were allowed to grow naturally without pruning. Through proper pruning, the size and shape

of Chinese hollies can easily be controlled.

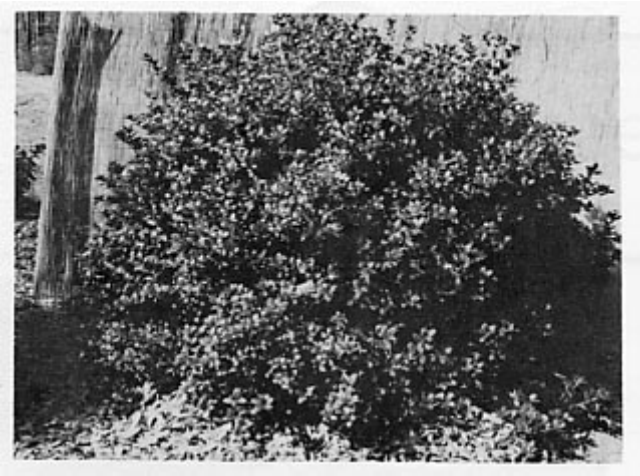

Figure 2. Dwarf Burfold Holly (Ilex cornula 'Dwarf Burfordi')

Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta), is a moderately fast-growing plant with a rounded but open habit of growth. Its lustrous, dark evergreen foliage is quadrangular in shape with 1 to 5 spines on the leaf margin. Only female plants produce red or orange-red berries. Mature height 15', spread 15'.

Burford Holly (Ilex cornuta 'Burfordi'), is a moderately fast-growing plant with a dense, rounded habit of growth and drooping branches. Its lustrous, dark evergreen foliage provides a good contrast for the abundance of red berries that it produces. Mature height 11', spread 10'.

Figure 3. Chinese hollies mature to a height of 15'.

Dwarf Burford Holly ILex cornuta 'Dwarf Burfordi'), is a slow-growing selection of Burford Holly having the same characteristic of heavy production of berries. It differs from Burford Holly in that this Dwarf variety is more compact and generally broader than tall. Mature height 4', spread 8'.

Figure 4. Compact Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta rotunda)

Compact Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta rotunda), is a compact, slow-growing holly with a round habit of growth. Its lustrous yellow-green leaves are rectangular with 7 sharp spines pointing up or down along the leaf margin. Maximum height 5', spread 8'.

Dwarf Compact Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta 'Dwarf Rotunda'), is a slow-growing selection of Compact Chinese Holly generally much broader than tall. The leaf characteristic is similar to that of Compact Chinese Holly. Mature size unknown.

D'Or Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta 'D'Or'), is a yellow fruited form of Chinese Holly with habits of growth characteristics similar to that of Burford Holly. It produces an abundance of yellow fruit in late fall or early winter. Mature size unknown.

Shiu-ying Chinese Holly (Ilex cornuta 'Shiuying'), is a slow-growing, compact, small tree with quadrangular, glassy, dark-green leaves with 3 spines. Its scarlet red fruit is born on long stems Mature size unknown.

Culture

Chinese hollies are adaptable to either full sun or shaded conditions. They grow best when planted in a deep, well-drained, sandy loam soil; however, they will tolerate moderately wet soils providing water does not remain standing for any long period of time. They prefer growing in a soil that is from near neutral to slightly acid (pH from 6.0 to 7.0). When planting in heavy soil, mix equal parts of sand and peat moss with the soil. Where the soil tends to be acid, add 8 ounces of lime per bushel of mixed soil.

Chinese hollies are naturally heavy feeders and require frequent fertilizing. Annual late fall or early spring application of 10-10-10 fertilizer is essential for proper growth and fruit production. The fertilizer needs of hollies can best be estimated by the size of the plant. For every 3 ft. in height or spread, use 1½ lb. of fertilizer. A plant that is 3 ft. tall would receive IVa Ib. of fertilizer, while a plant that is 9 ft. tall would receive 4½ lb. of fertilizer.

Chinese hollies may be pruned throughout the year, except in late summer or early fall. Hollies are often pruned just before the holidays for their greens. (See, "Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs", Extension Bulletin 150.)

Diseases and Insects

Chinese hollies are probably the most trouble- free of the evergreen hollies. Armillaria root rot and leafscald are generally rare but do occur. Armillaria root rot can only be controlled by sterilizing the

infested soils and by planting disease-free plants. Little can be done to prevent leafscald other than planting susceptible plants in partially shaded areas.

Waxy scale is the only insect known to attack Chinese hollies. This insect appears as a large, white, sticky drop of wax ½" in diameter on the branches. It can easily be controlled by repeated late spring and early summer applications of malathion at 6 tbs. of 25% wettable powder in 3 gallons of water.

Use Pesticides Safely

Pesticides are poisonous but may be used safely if handled with care. Use only recommended amounts and follow the directions and precautions as printed on the container label.

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by

Gouin, Francis
ornamental horticulture specialist
Department of Horticulture

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