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Ilex x'Nellie R. Stevens ': 'Nellie R. Stevens' Holly[1]

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Introduction

A hybrid between *Ilex aquifolium* and *Ilex cornuta* , Nellie R. Stevens Holly has kept the best traits of both parents, with lustrous, dark green leaves and abundant fruit production. Leaves are among the darkest of any plant. Vigorous and fast-growing, this Holly quickly grows into an attractive, broad pyramidally-shaped evergreen, 20 to 30 feet high and 10 to 12 feet wide. It will need a male Holly nearby to ensure pollination and production of the vivid red berries. Chinese Holly, *Ilex cornuta* will flower at the proper time and may be used for this purpose.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ilex x* 'Nellie R. Stevens': 'Nellie R. Stevens' Holly
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Ilex x*

Pronunciation: EYE-lecks

Common name(s): 'Nellie R. Stevens' Holly

Family: *Aquifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; screen; hedge; urban tolerant; highway median; container or planter; Christmas tree

Availability: not native to North America

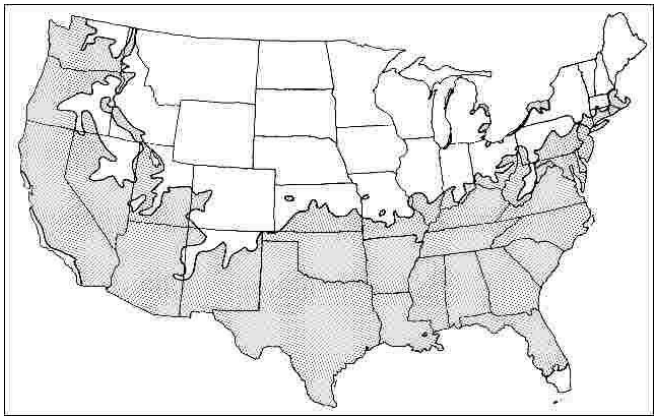

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: pyramidal, oval, upright/erect

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire, pectinate, spiny

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: brachidodrome, pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

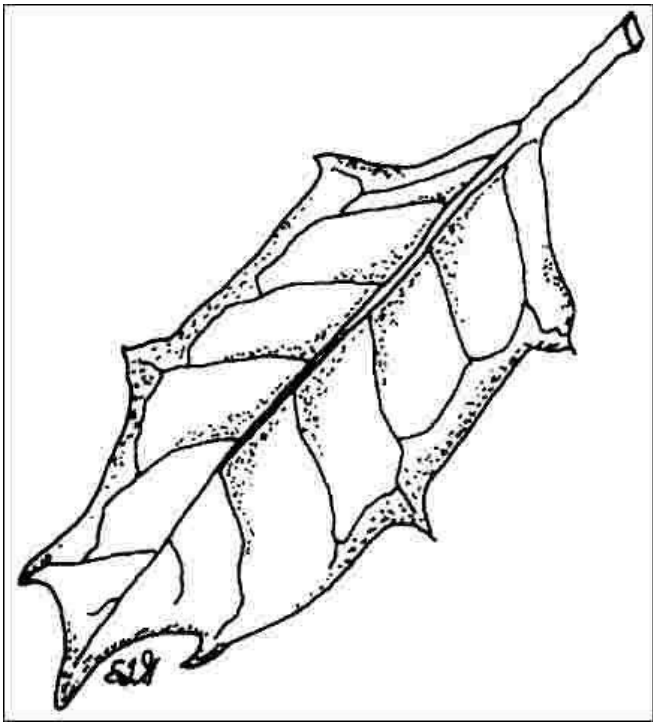

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained; extended flooding

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Nellie R. Stevens Holly is one of the best Hollies for the warmer regions of the country, and is ideally-suited for use as a screen or border. It maintains a nice, uniform shape without pruning. It is now becoming widely available and is one of the best plants for making a screen due to its very dense, symmetrical habit. Locate it where it will have enough space to spread since trees become wide at the base. Lower branches can be removed to create a clear trunk for planting along a walk or near a patio, but the tree really shines as a specimen or screen allowed to develop with all branches intact to the ground. Nursery operators grow the tree either as a multi-stemmed clump or with one central leader. Multi-stemmed trees may not hold up in ice storms as well as those with a central leader. Main branches on single-leadered trees are usually well-secured to the trunk, making the tree sturdy and a permanent fixture for almost any landscape.

Nellie R. Stevens Holly should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, slightly acid soil. Plants are drought-resistant once established.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, perhaps scale on occasion.

[1] This document is ENH472, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

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