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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Ilex x attenuata 'Fosteri': Fosters Holly[1]

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Introduction

Foster's holly #2 is one of the better cultivars of *Ilex* x *attenuata*, part of a group of hybrids between *Ilex cassine* x *Ilex opaca*. Foster's holly reaches 15 to 25 feet in height with a spread of 8 to 12 feet, creating a dense, pyramidal silhouette. The trunk usually grows straight up through the crown, unless the tree was topped. The small, glossy, almost black-green, linear leaves have spiny margins, and are joined in spring by showy, small, white flowers. The blooms are followed by the heavy production of brilliant red berries, which persist on female trees from fall through winter.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ilex x attenuata* 'Fosteri': Fosters Holly

General Information

Scientific name: *Ilex x attenuata*

Pronunciation: EYE-lecks x uh-ten-yoo-AY-tuh

Common name(s): Fosters holly

Family: *Aquifoliaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

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

Availability: not native to North America

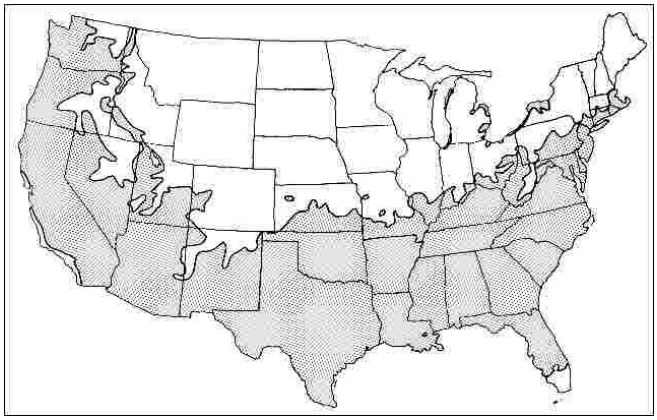

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 8 to 12 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: pyramidal, columnar

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: spiny, entire, pectinate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

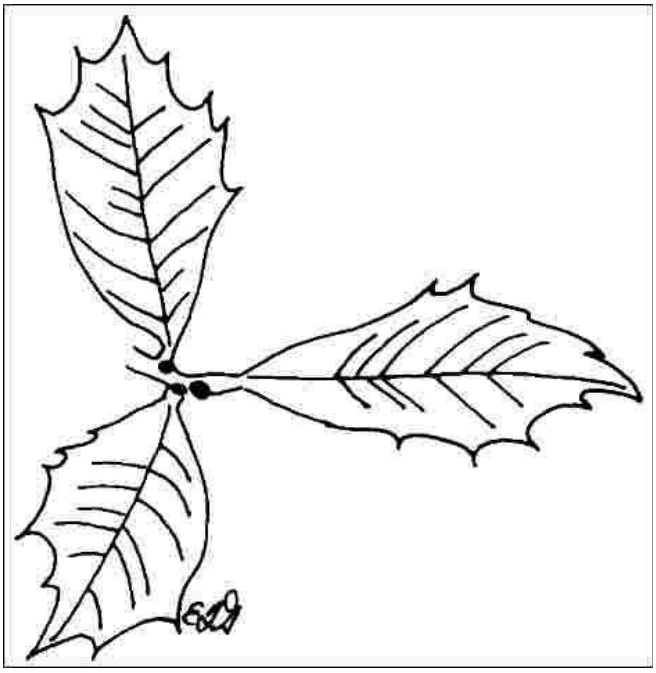

Figure 3. Foliage

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: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; 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: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

With its dense, compact, upright growth and neat habit, Foster's holly is ideal for use as a tightly clipped screen or hedge, or as a specimen, foundation, or container planting. Can also be planted in a small soil space or in a tall, narrow overhead space. Would probably make a suitable street tree but has not been extensively tried.

Foster's holly should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, slightly acid, moist soil. It is very drought-tolerant once established and has no serious pest problems.

There are other Foster's hollies—#1 and #4—but these are less available and perhaps not as showy.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

Pests

Scale and leaf miners.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

[1] This document is ENH474, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture Department. 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.
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