

Volume I
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Spring 2020



Sue Hunter

A 6" rooted cutting of *Ilex opaca* 'Satyr Hill' blooming in the greenhouse. Hollies are one of the only trees that will bloom and bear fruit on a less than one year old cutting.

For More Information

We welcome all inquires. All requests for information concerning holly or the Holly Society of America, Inc. should be addressed to the secretary. All technical questions will be referred to the foremost experts in the field.

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HOLLY SOCIETY BERRY BULLETIN

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From the President

Sue Hunter



Greetings Holly Society Members

I hope this finds you and your families well and coping with these challenging times. As you may already be aware, the Executive Officers of the Holly Society of America have decided to cancel this year's Annual Meeting in October related to the unpredictable nature of the virus COVID – 19. After serious discussion and contemplation, we felt it to be the only decision with regard to the well-being and health of our members and all concerned.

For over seventy years, the Holly Society has been crucial to those associated with the world of Horticulture and the Nursery Industry. We are a small, dedicated world-wide group of experts, professionals, novices, hobbyists and educators drawn together by our love for and common interest of the Genus *Ilex*. For our group to continue we are asking for your support. Please help us keep the Holly Society growing by making a financial contribution. Every donation will go directly to support our existing outreach, publishing the Holly Society Journal, funding Research, and paying the committed staff who we employ. Donations can be made via the PayPal button at hollysocam.org or your check can be mailed to Holly Society of America, PO Box 803, Millville, New Jersey 08332-0803. Thank you for your continued support.

The HSA Editorial team hopes you like this first edition of our Newsletter 'The Berry Bulletin', which will be published electronically twice per year in May and November. We hope to see this on-line publication evolve over time with your help! Let us know about Holly-related happenings or news in your geographical area. Have an opinion about a technical aspect of Holly propagation? Thinking about restoring or planting a new garden? Ideas about native Hollies and environmental restoration? We want to hear from you – email Editor Rachel Cobb at rcobb455@gmail.com

I'm encouraged. Decades ago when I was in my twenties and just starting out in the wholesale Nursery Trade, I was mentored by some wonderful 'old-timers' whose reassuring voices I can still hear say "When you're in the Nursery business you never have to worry during a hard economic time. Just stick with it and do what we do best and it'll all turn out right." I have many, many friends and colleagues in the Nursery Trade. We have kept in virtual touch with each other as we are able a little more than usual this spring. I wouldn't trade my profession for anything else on this earth. In the Nursery business, we are all each other's best customers, supporters, and advocates. And for that I am grateful.

Your President,
Sue Hunter



FULL CYCLE. Start to finish, from cuttings in the greenhouse (left), to finished BB products, (above), to the mature tree that Sue is standing under, (center).

Seasonal Calendar

By Jim Resch



May

- There's still time to plant new hollies of all kinds
- Watch for your American hollies to bloom, and avoid pesticide spraying while pollinator insects are flying
- Pull weeds!



Sue Hunter

Baby Robins in *Ilex opaca* 'Miss Helen'



Sue Hunter

August

- Keep watering new plantings
- Begin taking cuttings of American holly (*I. opaca*) in late August

September

- Continue taking cuttings of all evergreen hollies
- Begin planting in the landscape as soon as summer heat subsides, but continue to water

October

- Continue planting new hollies
- Cuttings can still be rooted with the aid of bottom heat in the root zone
- Take mental note of attractive sprigs for later use in holiday decorations

June

- Watch for your winterberries to bloom, and make sure you have males blooming at the same time as your females
- Shear new growth on evergreen hollies if a more formal shape is desired
- Keep weeding!

July

- Keep new plantings well mulched and watered
- Prune winterberries to just above newly set fruit to control plant size
- Take cuttings of Chinese holly (*I. cornuta*) and its hybrids starting in late July

The next great new holly introduction is just a few years, and a little luck away.
— Jim Resch



Holly and the Honeybees

By William N. Kuhl



A gentleman stopped by McLean Nurseries a while back saying that he wanted to buy some hollies. He said that he was installing a beehive on his property and, after doing some research, discovered that hollies were recommended as an excellent source of nectar. This got me to thinking about the holly and honey relationship.

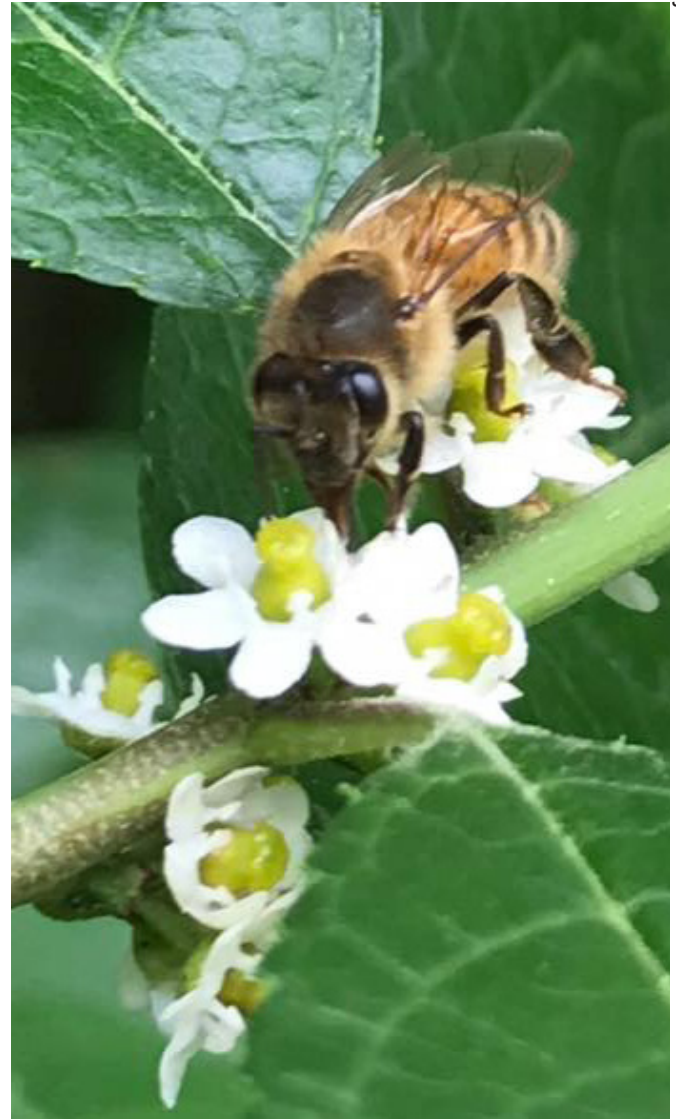
It seems we holly growers usually look at honeybees primarily as pollinators helping to set berries on our hollies rather than as honey producers. This connection now suggests a win-win opportunity for both the holly and the honeybees. The holly is pollinated and the bees produce honey with all of its sweet-tasting and medicinal benefits.

Our domestic honeybees are of European origin, introduced into North America by early colonists. These bees evolved with the native European holly species that bloom on old wood. The holly species most likely were *I. aquifolium* (English holly) and *I. perado* (Canary Island holly) and their many forms and varieties. In the Mid-Atlantic Region these and many other holly species and hybrids bloom in April after a normal winter. The result is a nectar flow in the early spring just in time to help provide food for hungry bees. A late spring with a late nectar flow could result in weakening the hive, or worse.

Honeybees live in large colonies in hives that over-winter many thousands of bees, which are raring to go in the warming springtime. Other pollinators such as bumblebees, wasps, and a variety of insects over-winter in much smaller colonies and are not available in such large numbers for early spring pollination. I have noticed more honeybee activity on early (April) blooming hollies and fewer on May and June blooming species (such as *I. opaca* and *I. verticillata*). Competition with nectar flow from nearby trees such as tulip poplars, which bloom at the same time as later blooming hollies, has an impact on honeybee activity.

At McLean Nurseries we have about a dozen beehives managed by a beekeeper named Gerard Dolan. He has won many a "Grand Prize" at the Maryland State Fair for his honey and beeswax candles. It appears that honey extracted from early blooming hollies is lighter in color with a delicate sweetness. Honey from *I. opaca* and later-blooming hollies is also sweet but darker in color, as it is mixed with nectar from trees and other vegetation blooming at the same time. The color and taste of holly honey from other site specific locations could vary to reflect local environmental conditions.

Fred Galle in his book, *Hollies — The Genus Ilex*, notes that, "The fragrance of *Ilex* flowers is often overlooked and not



Jim Resch

recorded... The light fragrance is best observed in early morning and is very attractive to bees. *Ilex latifolia* and *Ilex aquifolium* are noted for their fragrance." Additional research in this area would be most welcome. Our honeybees have enough challenges without struggling to find an adequate nectar supply. Hollies generate an abundant and timely nectar flow providing food for the honeybees and providing humans with holly berries and honey – one of nature's perfect foods.

William N. (Bill) Kuhl is a life member of the Holly Society and former long-time chairperson of the Show Committee. He is the owner of McLean Nurseries in Towson, Maryland.

This article originally appeared in *Holly Society Journal*, 34(2): 7-8 (2016).

Questions & Answers

Ask the experts @ [HollyExpert](https://hollysocam.org)



Q: When can I expect my American holly seedlings to bloom? And can I expect more males, or females?

A: You can expect males and females in about equal proportions, but it may take a few years to find out for sure. Professor Elwin Orton of Rutgers University looked at 1,930 seedlings from 10 randomly chosen, open-pollinated female trees. The male-to-female ratio was 1.03 to 1.00 after 9 years had elapsed, and all seedlings had produced flowers. Flowering began as early as age 3 and the latest bloomed at age 9, with the male plants flowering only somewhat earlier on the average than female. For this reason, the male-to-female ratio at age 5 was about 5 to 1. (Clark, Robert B., and Elwin R. Orton, Jr. 1967. Sex ratio in *Ilex opaca* Ait. HortScience 2:115)

Q: I have a question about a holly that I am interested in purchasing. It is a Santa's Delight Holly tree. I am still learning about these plants and wondering if there is a male and female version of this particular one. If it is female, what would be the best choice for a pollinator? - Heather (Western North Carolina)

A: Santa's Delight (a tradename for 'Sadezam', which usually also appears on the label) is a variegated English holly that is beginning to show up in more and more garden centers. It is a female, which under the right conditions will produce some red berries, but is usually grown for its attractive foliage regardless of whether it ever sets fruit. It should be winter-hardy for you in western North Carolina, Zone 7, though it will not enjoy hot, dry summer conditions. A compatible male that will bloom at the same time as Santa's Delight is 'Blue Prince', a hybrid of English holly and another species. It's usually available in most garden centers, even in the big box stores. Again, winter hardiness is not an issue for it, but the hot summers could be a problem. I would try planting both of these hollies where they will receive some afternoon shade if possible. A good, moisture-retentive soil would be ideal, but be sure it drains well as the plants' roots won't tolerate standing water. (Jim)

A: That is a beautiful holly that you ask about. Sad to say that most of the *aquifoliums* do not live well in our climate (Western North Carolina). Maybe this one will. Hefners Nursery near Hickory, NC, has been grafting *aquifolium* onto 'Nellie R. Stevens' root stock with great success. An *aquifolium* X *pernyi* male would probably be your best pollinator. Hope this helps. (Ray)

Q: We would like to put in a privacy screen with hollies that grow relatively quickly and tall (30' or more eventually) in northern Virginia. The hollies would be under tall deciduous trees. There are already a lot of native American hollies on the property (just not in the right location!). We are considering a number of cultivars, including 'Satyr Hill', 'Nellie Stevens', 'Judy Evans', and 'Jersey Princess'. Would you please let me know if you have any recommendations? - Whit

A: I am growing a group of American hollies as a tall hedge under similar conditions, along a fencerow, here in Zone 7a. 'Satyr Hill' and 'Jersey Princess' are among them, and both have done well even in the partially shaded conditions. 'Jersey Princess' is the fastest grower of the lot, and the foliage is a beautiful, dark green, though it has relatively few fruit. It grows at least a foot a year, maybe two in good years. I started planting my trees in the early '90s, and they would all be 25-30 feet tall by now, had I not chosen to prune and top them at around 15 feet. American hollies are well-adapted as understory trees, though it's worth keeping in mind that hollies grown in partial shade will not bear as many fruit as those in full sun, and their foliage will not be as dense. I have found that a bit of pruning on the fastest-growing side branches helps to address this and keep their shape. If you like yellow-berried hollies, I can also recommend 'Longwood Gardens' and 'Boyce Thomson Xanthocarpa' as a tall hedge. A few other good red-fruited ones are 'Dan Fenton', 'Menantico', and 'Bear Crossing'. If you already have male trees on your property, you may not need to plant another male, but if you want one, a male with great foliage is 'Jersey Knight'. By the way, 'Nellie R. Stevens' is actually not an American holly, and in my experience would not do so well in partial shade as a tall hedge, as it grows more slowly and with a more open habit. (Jim)

Q: We are looking to plant a holly tree or 2. We are looking at only trees, we want one that has beautiful berries and we would like pretty foliage also. We would like them to mature at about 15-18 feet tall. We live in Trimble County, KY, about half way between Louisville, KY, and Cincinnati, OH. Would you know someone that would suggest a few? - Donald

A: In your area, our native American holly would do well. It grows about a foot a year, or perhaps a little more. It may eventually reach 30 feet or more, but will take decades and decades to get there. Some of the best female hollies (the ones with berries) are 'Satyr Hill' and 'Dan Fenton'. You will need a male American holly somewhere in the vicinity to ensure pollination. One of the best males is 'Jersey Knight'. It won't get berries, but has very attractive, dark

Questions & Answers Continued



Ask the experts @ [HollyExpert](#)

green foliage. Smaller plants are available from specialty mail order nurseries. Larger, field-grown plants are somewhat harder to find, and the availability of exact varieties varies by location. (Jim)

Q: I am looking for any additional information on *Ilex serrata* species, with particular interest in pollinators. We have 2 *Ilex serrata* cultivars here at Frelinghuysen Arboretum (Morristown, New Jersey), but no known male plants. All of our research online has come up with a few hybrid plants, but were looking for a more definitive answer. Any knowledge pertaining to proximity and timing would be greatly appreciated. – Nick

A: There are a handful of *I. serrata* cultivars which have occasionally been offered for sale in this country, but to

the best of my knowledge, all are female. Fortunately, *I. serrata* can be pollenized with our native *I. verticillata*, producing fruit and viable interspecific hybrids. The blooming period of *I. serrata* seems to be intermediate between the early- and late-flowering forms of *I. verticillata*. I would think that the best strategy would be to plant one of the *I. serrata* x *verticillata* hybrid males 'Apollo' or 'Rhett Butler' to ensure pollination of your *I. serrata*. If these are not available, you could try planting both the *I. verticillata* males 'Jim Dandy' and 'Southern Gentleman'. 'Jim Dandy' blooms too early, while 'Southern Gentleman' is a bit too late, for either of them to efficiently pollenize *I. serrata*, but a combination of the two of them would almost guarantee some overlap. Whatever males you choose, most experts seem to recommend siting them within 50 feet of the female, in plenty of sun with a clear line of sight for bees and pollinators to travel between the plants. (Jim)



Ilex cornuta 'One Thorny Lady' flowers before freeze April 16, 2020



Ilex cornuta 'One Thorny Lady' flowers after freeze April 18, 2020



Ilex cornuta 'One Thorny Lady' flowers after freeze May 1, 2020

Jim Resch

For many of us, 2020 has been a difficult year, and for so many reasons. After an absurdly warm winter with little to no snow, many of us saw our earliest hollies coming into bloom even earlier than normal. And then a cold snap hit! Here's a flower cluster on *Ilex cornuta* 'One Thorny Lady' in peak bloom just before a night where the mercury dropped to 29 degrees Fahrenheit. Within a day, the pistils of these tender flowers started to turn black, and the entire flower structure shriveled and died within a couple of weeks. Unfortunately, this means there won't be any berries this year on this branch. :- (– Jim Resch

Opinion

Editors Note: Mary Harrison writes in response to a few who are not in favor of *opaca*. It has been mentioned that *Ilex opaca* does not grow in Butler County, OH because it does not like Ohio clay soil.

Hello,

In regard to your article concerning hollies, I disagree with your assessment of the *Ilex opaca*, our native evergreen holly. I agree that the *Ilex verticillata* varieties are a wonderful deciduous plant, producing winter berry color, but as a lifelong gardener and member of the Holly Society of America, I have *Ilex opaca* seedlings volunteering throughout my 6 acres of gardens in the Miami valley, and I grow approximately 20 varieties. A friend who needed a male to pollinate the female *opaca* in his landscape and does not have room for the male plant takes cuttings from the Miami University campus and hangs them in bottles in his tree during bloom for pollination. So I find that they are quite adaptable to our soils and weather conditions.

In an article by Richard Larson in the [Holly Society of America Journal, Volume 2 – 2019](#), he writes of the 200 cultivars of American holly in the Dawes Arboretum collection that was established in the 1950's through 1960's. The Great Rivers chapter of the Holly Society has held at least two of their meetings at Dawes to view this wonderful collection. Richard Larson has also just registered a 17 year old *Ilex opaca* volunteer found in a fence row in Zanesville, OH, and named it 'Mission Oaks' for Albert Henley Jr. There are *Ilex opaca* over 30' tall covered with red berries in Madison, OH near Lake Erie, with extreme winds and winter weather, never losing their foliage. I agree that the English hollies are not for our zone, but would hate to suggest to gardeners that the native *Ilex opaca* varieties with their berries of yellows and reds should be considered hard to grow.

Respectfully,

Mary Harrison, *Mary's Plant Farm, Hamilton, OH*



Ready to plant, a potted *Ilex opaca* 'Mission Oaks'. Purchased at the 2019 HSA Plant Sale.
– Rachel Cobb

The Dawes Arboretum

Newark, OH USDA Hardiness Zone 5b



The Dawes Arboretum, Newark, OH, is non-profit garden that received arboretum status in 1929. It was founded by Beman Dawes who purchased the original north end section of the arboretum as a summer residence. He and his wife, Bertie, resided in their summer house, now Daweswood House Museum, on the grounds of the arboretum until their deaths. Their love for trees and extension of this love to the local communities of Licking County remain the basis of our strong commitment to horticultural education. The expansion of the arboretum continued gradually from its inception to the present and now encompasses nearly 2000 acres, 400 of which are intensively cultivated. The diversity of woody trees, shrubs, groundcovers and vines now numbers over 5000 taxa.

The Holly Collection has existed in its present location since the 1950's, but most of the American hollies (*Ilex opaca*) were first established in the 1960's. Subsequent propagation and additions to our collection began in earnest in the 1990's. We continue to add regularly to this collection, and over 200 cultivars of American holly now exist in what is, certainly, the most northern comprehensive representation of this species. We have also focused on the lesser holly "cousins", deciduous hollies, and we have an excellent representation of common winterberry (*I. verticillata*) and hybrid winterberries (*I. verticillata* × *I. serrata*).

We only have one test in our collections, *I. verticillata* 'Chickemmo', which we have had since the mid 1990's. I consider it a run of the mill common winterberry with average sized fruit. It lies next to Bright Horizon common winterberry which I think is Polly Hill's best common winterberry. I would recommend it generally but not specifically over other clones.

Report submitted by Richard Larson,

Website: <https://dawesarb.org>

Full Arborium Report: <http://www.hollysocam.org/PDF/reports/2018/Dawes-18.pdf>

Noteworthy

A few picks from the HSA Facebook posts.

Grand old lady - this female American holly grows in bottom land forest along the Christina River in Delaware. It thrives on undeveloped land widely believed to be a colonial-era cemetery, from days when grave markers were made of wood instead of stone and thus disappeared into the landscape over time. This tree is about forty feet tall and is surrounded by much taller oaks. (Jim Resch)



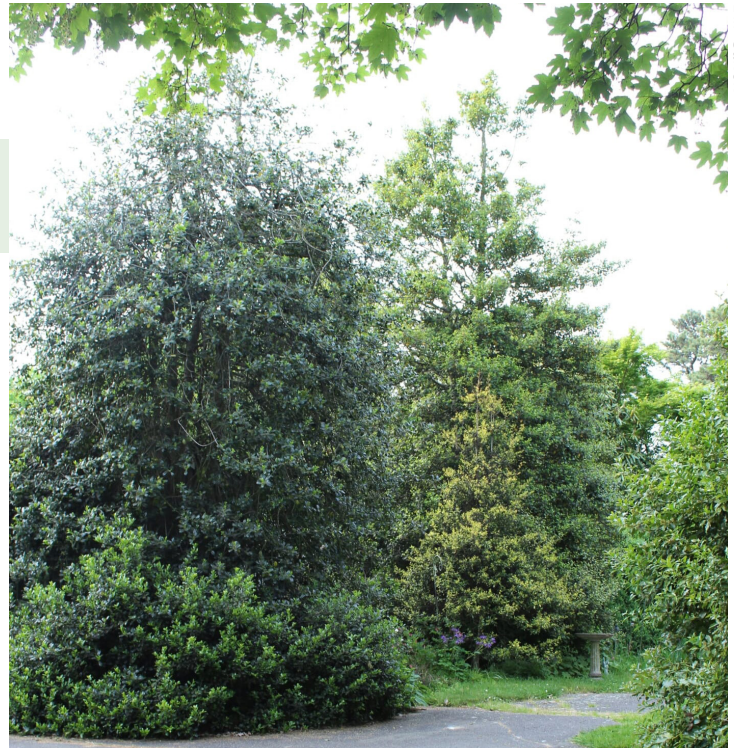
Jim Resch



Jim Resch

Honeybees are nice, but we can't forget our native bees, wasps, flies, beetles, and even ants that account for most of the pollination of our hollies. This is a paper wasp, *Polistes metricus*, finding the nectar of 'Elizabeth Coleman' flowers irresistible. All summer long, these wasps feed on caterpillars in the garden. (Jim Resch)

Lush new growth on Hollies this year at Bill Canon's Holly Orchard in Brewster, Massachusetts.



Bill Canon



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