



Ilex x attenuata 'Fosteri' Fosters Holly¹

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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* (Fig. 1). 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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ilex x attenuata* 'Fosteri'

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

Common name(s): Fosters Holly

Family: Aquifoliaceae

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

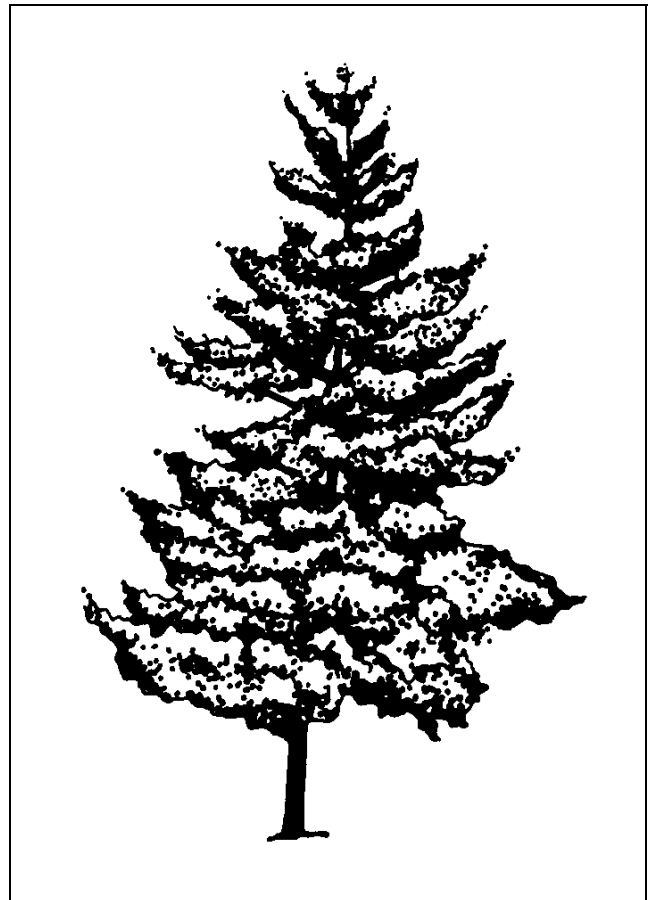


Figure 1. Middle-aged Fosters Holly.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 8 to 12 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: columnar; pyramidal

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire; pectinate; spiny

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

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

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

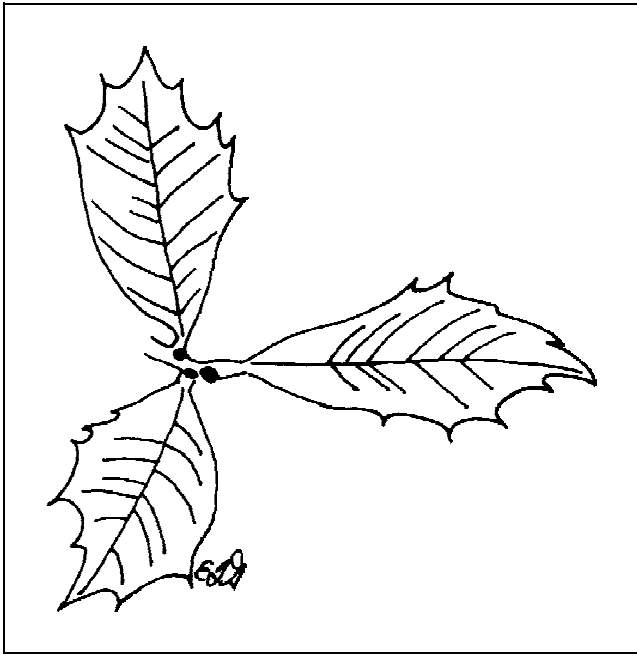


Figure 3. Foliage of Fosters Holly.

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

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.