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Holly 'Savannah'

Leaf Color Green
Fall Color No change in fall color

Leaf Identification

Type: Simple
Arrangement: Alternate
Venations: Pinnate
Margins: Pectinate and terminal spine
Shapes: Elliptic and ovate
Length: Less than 2in./5cm to 4in./10cm

Fruit Color Red

The fruit is fleshy and round.

Environment

This plant tolerates some drought and some salt.
This plant will grow in dry soil.
Suitable soil is well-drained/loamy, sandy or clay.
The pH preference is an acidic to slightly alkaline (less than 6.8 to 7.7) soil.

Landscape Uses

- Border
- Espalier
- Street tree
- Specimen

Attributes and Features

- Attracts birds
- Inconspicuous blooms
- Persistent fruit
- Attractive fruit

Ilex x attenuata 'Savannah'

Holly, Topal Holly

Aquifoliaceae (Holly)

Type Tree, woody plant

Hardy range 6A to 9B

Height 25' to 50' / 7.60m to 15.20m

Spread 6' to 10' / 1.80m to 3.00m

Growth rate Average

Form Columnar

Exposure Partial shade or partial sun to full sun

Persistence Evergreen

Bloom Color White

Bloom Time Spring

Native Habitat

Hybrid origin

Crown, Branch and Twig

This plant is symmetrical with a medium texture and has a open crown.

This plant's bark is thin and not showy.

Branches or twigs are of medium thickness.

This plant is often grown with multiple trunks.

This plant can be trained to a single trunk.

Little pruning is required.

This plant has low flammability.

Culture Notes

This holly grows quickly in full sun or partial shade on moist, acid soils. Growth is poor and foliage chlorotic on alkaline soil. Plants in full sun can grow a dense canopy, those in partial shade are more open. This plant is considered mostly allergy free and causes little or no allergy problems in most people. Trees attract cedar waxwings, mockingbirds, robins and many other birds.



This holly makes a fairly durable street tree throughout its range except in the deep south where the plant will need sufficient space to explore plenty of soil space. It is quite drought-tolerant once it becomes well-established but can suffer in the extreme south in very dry years. Most trees are sheared in the nursery, unfortunately, and this practice is often repeated in the landscape after planting. The natural shape of the tree is rarely seen but is a graceful pyramid of drooping branches growing from a strong central trunk, laden with bright red berries which remain on the trees until eaten by birds. The crown grown with one central trunk is narrow, making it well-suited for urban areas having restricted vertical space. Savannah Holly has also performed well in sidewalk cutouts.

Multi-stemmed, topped, and trimmed trees grow a wider crown and are probably not as suited for narrow, limited-space downtown sites as their single-stemmed counterparts. The tree should be grown with a central trunk. Young trees which are topped in the nursery grow several upright, multiple trunks. These eventually droop to the horizontal and then become more weeping, creating an unkempt, asymmetrical mess. Training the tree into a single-trunked tree will increase its durability and resistance to storm-damage, although many nurseries offer multi-trunked specimens. The tree grows well even in small tree pits carved out of downtown sidewalks.

Wood is considered diffuse porous meaning that there is little difference in size of pores between spring and summer wood.

Tree establishment specifications

Choose good quality trees for planting. The most common cause of young tree failure is planting too deep. In most instances, the point where the top-most root in the root ball originates from the trunk (referred to as the root flare zone or root collar) should be located just above the soil surface. You may have to dig into the root ball to find the root flare. If there is nursery soil over this area, scrape it off. Never place ANY soil over the root ball. The planting hole should be at least twice the width of the root ball, preferably wider because roots grow best in loose soil. In all but exceptional circumstances where the soil is very poor, extensive research clearly shows that there is no need to incorporate any amendments into the backfill soil. Simply use the loosened soil that came out of the planting hole. Simply planting with the topmost portion of the root ball slightly higher than the surrounding soil might still install the tree too deep - be sure to locate the root flare.

Weed suppression during establishment is essential. Apply a 3-inch thick layer of mulch to at least a six-foot diameter circle around the tree. This area should be at least two feet in diameter for each inch of tree trunk diameter and maintained during the establishment period. Apply a thinner layer of mulch directly over the root ball but keep it at least 10 inches from the trunk. This allows rainwater, irrigation and air to easily enter the root ball and keeps the trunk dry. Placing mulch against the trunk and applying too thick a layer above the root ball can kill the plant by oxygen starvation, death of bark, stem and root diseases, prevention of hardening off for winter, vole and other rodent damage to the trunk, keeping soil too wet, or repelling water.

Regular irrigation after planting encourages rapid root growth that is essential for tree establishment. Trees provided with regular irrigation through the first growing season after transplanting require about 3 months (hardiness zones 9-11), 6 months (hardiness zones 7-8), or one year or more (hardiness zones 2-6) per inch of trunk diameter to fully establish roots in the landscape soil. Trees in desert climates may take longer to establish. Trees that are under-irrigated during this establishment period (and most trees are) often require additional time to establish because roots grow more slowly. Be prepared to irrigate through the entire establishment period, especially during periods of drought.

Irrigation also helps maintain and encourage the desirable dominant leader in the tree canopy on large-maturing trees. Instead of a dominant leader, trees that are under-irrigated during the establishment period often develop undesirable, low, co-dominant stems and double leaders that can split from the tree later.

Unlike established plants, which do best with deep, infrequent irrigation, research clearly shows that recently transplanted trees and shrubs establish quickest with light, frequent irrigation. For trees planted in spring or summer, provide one (cooler hardiness zones) to three irrigations (warmer hardiness zones) each week during the first few months after planting. Daily irrigation in the warmest hardiness zones provides the quickest establishment. Following the initial few months of frequent irrigation, provide weekly irrigation until plants are fully established. With every irrigation, apply one (cool climates) to two (warm climates) gallons of water per inch trunk diameter (e.g. 2 to 4 gallons for a 2-inch tree) over the root ball only. In most landscapes that receive more than 30 inches of rain or irrigation annually, if the mulch area is maintained weed-free, irrigation does not need to be applied outside of the root ball. Never add water if the root ball is saturated.

In cooler hardiness zones, in all but the driest years, irrigation of spring- and summer-planted trees usually can be discontinued once fall color has begun. Irrigation of fall planted trees, however, should be continued until foliage has dropped from the deciduous trees in the region. In warmer climates, irrigate fall-and winter-planted trees as described for the spring- and summer-planted trees.



In drier, desert climates there is benefit to be gained from applying additional irrigation outside of the root ball area. This is best done by making a large diameter berm four to six inches high, then filling it with water so it percolates into the soil. For the first two years, irrigate twice each week through the spring, once per week in summer provided monsoons arrive, and twice each week again in fall if it remains warm. Taper off watering to once or twice each month in winter and resume twice weekly next spring. For years three to five, water twice per month in spring, summer, and fall and once or twice per month in winter. During years five through seven, water once every three weeks in warm weather and once every six weeks in winter. After this, the drought-tolerant desert trees should be able to survive on natural rainfall.

Trees with good, strong structure need no pruning at planting, except to remove broken twigs. Do not remove branches to compensate for root loss - research has shown that this can be detrimental to establishment.

Pests, Diseases and Damaging Agents

Pests: Scale and leaf miners cause damage, but this is rare. A severe witches broom-like disease attacks and kills trees in parts of Florida and can be severe. Susceptible to two-lined spittle bug.

