

# *Ilex cassine*: Dahoon Holly<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Attractive when tightly clipped into a tall screen or allowed to grow naturally into its single-trunked, small tree form, Dahoon Holly is ideal for a variety of landscape settings. Capable of reaching 40 feet in height, Dahoon Holly is usually seen at a height of 20 to 30 feet with an 8 to 12-foot spread. The smooth, supple, shiny dark green, evergreen leaves, two to three inches long, have just a few serrations near the tip. Possessing male and female flowers on separate



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ilex cassine*: Dahoon Holly  
Credits: Ed Gilman

plants, at least two Dahoon Hollies (male and female) must be planted in the landscape to ensure production of the brilliant red berries in fall and winter. The berries serve as an excellent food source for wildlife but are far less prevalent than on East Palatka or Fosters Holly.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ilex cassine*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-lecks kuh-SIGH-nee

**Common name(s):** Dahoon Holly

**Family:** *Aquifoliaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7A through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** hedge; screen; specimen; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; reclamation; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft

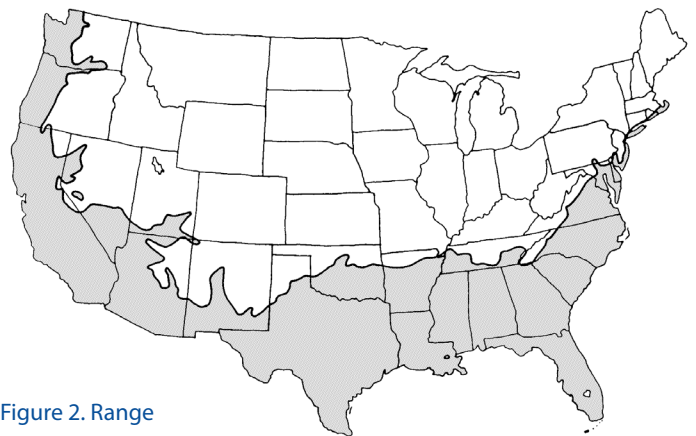


Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH458, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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wide; urban tolerant; Bonsai; highway median; container or planter

**Availability:** generally available

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 12 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** pyramidal, oval

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire, serrate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval), oblong

**Leaf venation:** 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

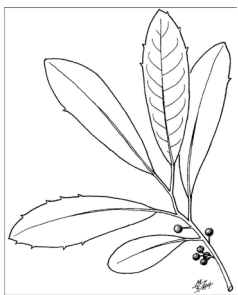


Figure 3. Foliage

## 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, yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts squirrels/mammals; 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:** partial sun or partial shade, full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Growing well in full sun to partial shade, Dahoon Holly does best on moist soils since the wet, boggy soils of swamps is its native environment. Dahoon Holly can tolerate drier locations with some watering, but often has a thin crown in this environment. It is not recommended in the southern part of its range in a dry, exposed site unless irrigation is provided. It lends itself well to use as a specimen or street tree, and is ideal for naturalizing in moist locations. Little pruning is needed to create a well-structured, strong tree. It appears to adapt well to the confined spaces of urban and downtown landscapes and is tolerant of some salt spray. The crown is fuller in full sun.

*Ilex cassine* var. *angustifolia*, Alabama Dahoon, has narrower, more linear leaves than the species and more abundant but smaller berries. *Ilex myrtifolia* has smaller leaves and fruit, and its cultivar 'Loweii' has yellow berries and dark green foliage.

Propagation is by seeds, which germinate in one year, or by cuttings. Cuttings are preferred since they give plants of a known sex and also root easily.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. A twig gall sometimes forms in response to a fungus infection. Mites can infest foliage on trees planted on dry sites.