

# *Ilex vomitoria*: Yaupon Holly<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This upright, spreading small evergreen tree or large shrub, capable of reaching 15 to 25 feet in height with a similar spread, has small, grey-green, leathery leaves densely arranged along smooth, stiff, light grey branches. Plants in the landscape require about 10-years to develop a distinct vase-shape. Sometimes clipped into a tight hedge, Yaupon Holly is ideal for training into a small tree with lower branches removed to reveal the interestingly-contorted multiple trunks. It can also be used for topiaries, espaliers, specimens, screens, or barriers. The non-showy male and female flowers appear on separate plants and are followed on the female plants by the production of brilliant red berries (yellow on some cultivars) which are quite attractive to wildlife. The flowers attract bees for several weeks. Purchase plants with berries on them (females) if you want a berry-producing plant, or buy trees which were propagated from cuttings of female plants.

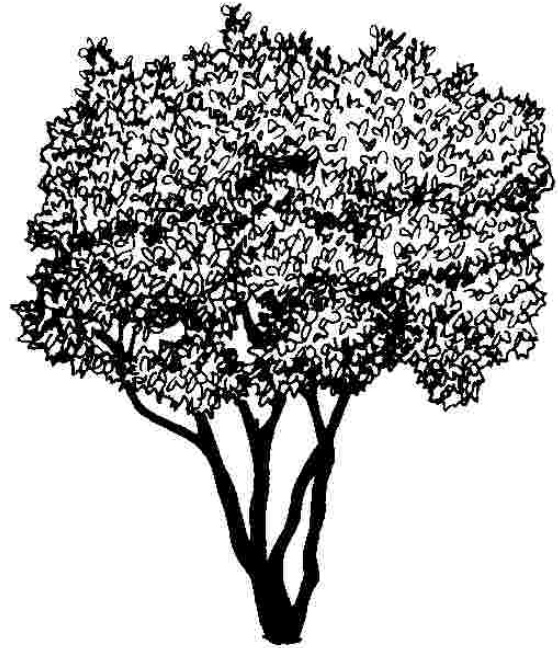


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ilex vomitoria*: Yaupon Holly

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ilex vomitoria*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-lecks vom-ih-TOR-ee-uh

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

**Family:** Aquifoliaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** weedy native

**Uses:** parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet

wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; espalier; hedge; deck or patio; screen; specimen; container or planter; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); urban tolerant; highway median; Bonsai  
**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

1. This document is ENH470, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.



Figure 2. Range

**Crown shape:** vase, round

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrulate, crenate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** brachidodrome, pinnate, reticulate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### 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 droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

### Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

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

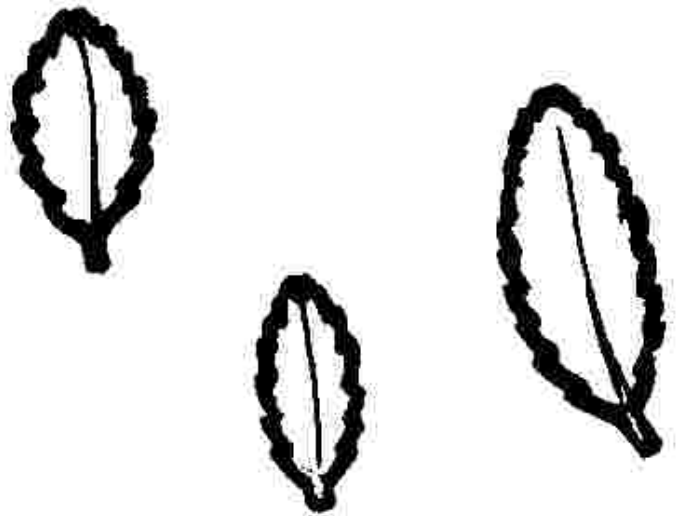


Figure 3. Foliage

### Use and Management

A tough native of the southern United States, Yaupon Holly grows quickly in a variety of locations, from full sun or shade to seaside or swamps, in sand or clay. Crowns will be thin in the shade. It will grow in soil with a pH in the 7's and is very tolerant of drought and sea salt. It sprouts readily from the roots forming clumps of upright shoots beneath the canopy. Sprouting is most troublesome if the soil beneath the canopy is disturbed, as in planting shrubs or flowers under the tree. These need to be pruned to the ground two or three times each year to maintain a neat appearance. Consider this when selecting trees for use on streets, parking lots, and other low-maintenance areas since thickets often form.

Yaupon Holly is one of the most durable and adaptable of the small-leaved evergreen Hollies for use in southern landscapes. It grows well throughout its range in sidewalk

cutouts and other sites with limited exposed soil. Wild Yaupons are protected by Florida statute.

A few of the available cultivars include: 'Folsom's Weeping', similar to 'Pendula'; 'Jewel', female plant with heavy fruit production; 'Nana', dwarf, compact shrub form, male plant, no berries; 'Pendula' ('Grey's Weeping'), large weeping specimen, sparsely foliated, to 35 feet tall; 'Pride of Houston', medium-sized shrub with heavy fruit production; and a low shrub called 'Schelling's Dwarf' ('Stroke's Dwarf'), more compact than 'Nana'. Yellow-fruited cultivars include: 'Aureo', yellow berries; 'Otis Miley', small leaves, yellow fruit; 'Wiggins' Yellow', yellow fruit.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

## **Pests**

Scale, leaf miners, mites, aphids appear to form a long list of problems, but none are normally serious.

## **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.