

# *Ilex x attenuata* 'Savannah': Savannah Holly<sup>1</sup>

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

## Introduction

Savannah Holly is a beautifully shaped tree, with a narrow, open pyramidal to columnar form. A 35-foot-tall tree can be eight feet wide in 40 years, indicating a moderate growth rate. The spiny, dull, dark green leaves have wavy margins and are accented in fall with heavy clusters of red berries which persist throughout the fall and winter. Male and female flowers appear on separate trees and must be located in the same neighborhood to ensure production of berries. Many nurserymen propagate from female trees so most nursery trees have berries. Many trees are grown with a central trunk and skinny lateral branches, although some nurseries offer those with several upright trunks growing straight up through the crown. Many trees are sheared in the nursery to create more branches and a fuller canopy than will be seen several years after planting.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ilex x attenuata*

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

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

**Family:** Aquifoliaceae

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

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

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



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ilex x attenuata* 'Savannah': Savannah Holly

parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft

**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 30 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** columnar

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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 density:** open  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** terminal spine, spiny, pectinate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval), ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 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 don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** little required  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

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

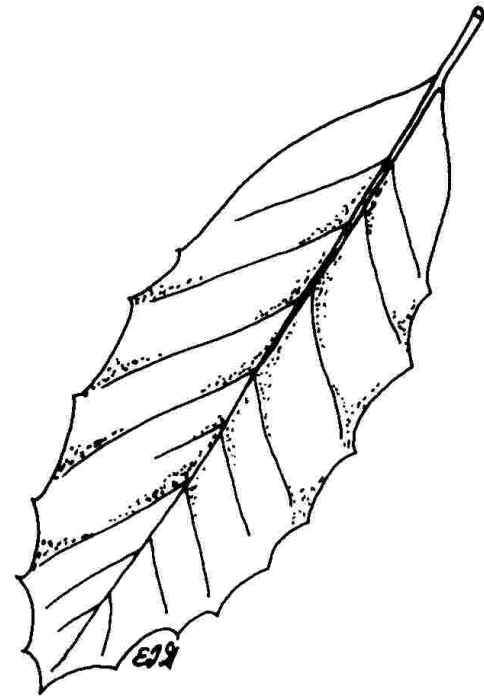


Figure 3. Foliage

## Use and Management

Savannah Holly is ideal for use as a street tree, framing tree, specimen, or barrier planting. There are better screens available such as Nellie R. Stevens Holly and Foster's Holly which are denser than the open-canopied Savannah Holly. Roots are rarely invasive due to their great number and relatively small diameter. This native tree is ideal for naturalizing on moist, slightly acid soils, and the fruit is very attractive to wildlife, serving as an excellent food source.

A popular landscape plant, this broad-leafed evergreen has served a variety of uses through the years. The American Indians used preserved Holly berries as decorative buttons and were much sought after by other tribes who bartered for them. The wood has been used for making canes, scroll work and furniture, and has even been substituted for ebony in inlay work when stained black.

Growing well in full sun to partial shade, Savannah Holly should be located on fertile, well-drained but moist, slightly acid soils. Berry production is best in full sun. Savannah Holly foliage thins slightly during drought but insect and disease infestations are usually minimal.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

## **Pests**

Savannah Holly is usually pest-free.

Holly leaf miner larvae mines out the leaf middle leaving yellow or brown trails.

Scales of various types may infest Holly.

Spider mites cause discoloration and speckling of Holly foliage.

## **Diseases**

Savannah Holly is not normally infected with disease.

Tar spot may occasionally cause small yellow spots on the leaves in early summer. Eventually the spots turn reddish brown with narrow yellow borders. Leaves may not drop prematurely but the infected areas drop out leaving holes in the leaves. Gather up and destroy badly infected leaves.

Many different fungi cause leaf spots on Holly. Reduce the injury caused by leaf spots by keeping trees healthy. Dispose of diseased leaves.

Cankers caused by several different fungi lead to sunken areas on stems and plant dieback. Keep trees healthy and prune out infected branches.

Spine spot is small gray spots with purple margins and is caused by spines of one leaf puncturing an adjacent leaf.

Chlorosis symptoms are light green or yellowish leaves with darker green veins. This problem is due to a high pH leading to iron deficiency. Use acidifying fertilizers and sulfur to bring down the pH. Sprays of iron chelate will green up plants.

Purple blotches on the leaves are caused by some environmental factor such as nutrient deficiencies, drought, and winter injury.