Ilex cornuta ‘Burfordii’: Burford Holly
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Introduction
This dense evergreen shrub or small tree has glossy, dark green leaves, each with a single terminal spine. Leaves are among the glassiest and darkest green of trees. The somewhat-showy clusters of fragrant, springtime, white flowers attract bees. The large, bright red, long-lasting berries during the fall and winter provide a nice contrast to the dark green leaves. The plants are self-fertile and do not need a male plant located nearby for pollination. It is one of the most popular shrubs in some areas of the country.

Common name(s): Burford Holly
Family: Aquifoliaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida’s Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.
Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); 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; deck or patio; screen; espalier; urban tolerant; highway median; container or planter; hedge
Availability: not native to North America

General Information
Scientific name: Ilex cornuta
Pronunciation: EYE-lecks kor-NOO-tuh

Figure 1. Mature Ilex cornuta ‘Burfordii’: Burford Holly
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
**Description**

Height: 15 to 25 feet  
Spread: 15 to 25 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical  
Crown shape: vase, round  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: medium

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire, terminal spine  
Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval)  
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

**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: green, gray  
Current year twig thickness: medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; extended flooding; 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

**Use and Management**

Although typically pruned for formal hedges, the large form and gracefully drooping branches of Burford Holly make it ideal for unpruned natural plantings or as a specimen for spacious areas and large buildings. There are much better plants for pruning into formal hedges. Burford Holly can also be trained as an attractive vase-shaped multi-stemmed small tree. Trees trained in this fashion often have a thick crown comprised of many branches and small-diameter trunks. Burford Holly should be grown and used in this fashion more often.

Growing best in rich, well-drained, slightly acid soil, Burford Holly does well in full sun or part shade. However, flowering and subsequent fruiting is reduced in shady locations. Burford Holly is drought-tolerant and easy to grow once established. It is well suited for low-maintenance landscapes which receive little or no irrigation or fertilizer after trees are established. Once the tree reaches 10 or 15 feet tall, growth rate slows. ‘Burfordii Nana’ makes a better shrub than ‘Burfordii’ due to a slower growth rate and smaller leaves.

Propagation is by cuttings only.

**Pests**

Burford Holly can be plagued with severe infestations of tea scale.

**Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.
**Literature Cited**