

AMERICAN HOLLY

Ilex opaca Ait.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Holly: White holly.

FORM: Height 20-30 feet, diameter 6-18 inches, sometimes 50 feet high, trunk 3 feet in diameter, continuous through the crown; crown compact, conical, consisting of slender horizontal or slightly drooping branches bearing evergreen leaves.

BARK: Close, white or grayish-brown or yellowish-brown, up to 1/2 inch thick, rough with age.

TWIGS: Rather slender, at first rusty hairy, finally smooth and light brown.

LEAVES: Alternate, simple, thick, elliptical to obovate-oblong, with wavy margin and spiny teeth, dull dark green, glabrous and centrally grooved above, paler and smooth below, 2-4 inches long, persist on the twig about 3 years.

FLOWERS: Appear in the spring, small, dioecious, axillary on slender pedicels; staminate in 3-9 flowered cymes; the pistillate singly or 2 or 3 together, petals greenish-white, about 1/6 inch long.

FRUIT: A bright red drupe, occasionally yellow, about 1/4 inch in diameter, containing a light brown nutlet, usually with 4 ribs.

WINTER BUDS: Alternate, short, the terminal acute; lateral obtuse, somewhat downy.

WOOD: Hard, tough, rather weak, close-grained, ivory-white when first cut, turning brown with exposure.

USES: Landscaping. Historical uses: sprays of evergreen leaves and bright berries used for holiday decorations; wood used for umbrella handles, turnery of various sorts, souvenirs.

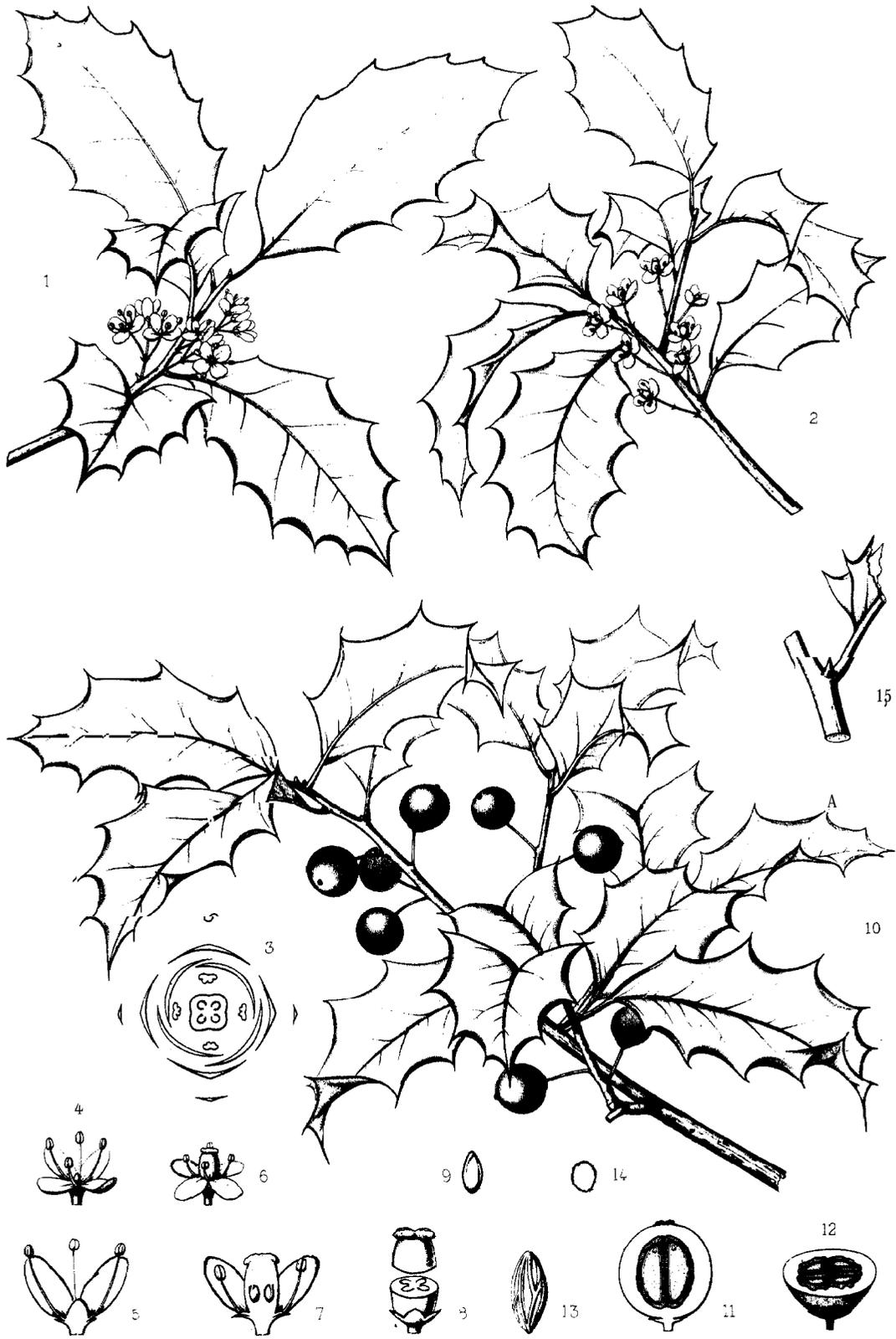
HABITAT: Prefers moist soil near water, rich moist bottom land, drier soils in protected places.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Unique evergreen leaves, with spiny teeth; small red fruit, often persisting far into the winter; bole usually continuous throughout the crown.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Common throughout the state.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE

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| 1. A branch with staminate flowers | 8. Cross section of an ovary |
| 2. A branch with pistillate flowers | 9. An ovule |
| 3. Diagram of a flower | 10. A fruiting branch |
| 4. A staminate flower | 11. Vertical section of a fruit |
| 5. Vertical section of a staminate flower | 12. Cross section of a fruit |
| 6. A pistillate flower | 13. A nutlet |
| 7. Vertical section of a pistillate flower | 14. An embryo |
| | 15. Part of a leaf with a stipule |



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