

I see a bright future for some man who will put his all into a holly orchard.

The trees at St. Mary's are very fine as are these at the Quinn place. One of the trees at the latter place is so densely covered with berries that the foliage is smothered. The fruit does not have an attractive color; otherwise, the tree is a wonder.

The cuttings I put in this fall are rooting better than any I tried in the past; most were in sand before September 7th, and many show roots. Some varieties, of course, are better than others. On the whole, the prospects are good.

Thank you for the hollies. The Army damaged some of the last lot, but I patched them up and they are recovering. I wish you could see what the Army did to one of the best sections of holly. It was terrible.

Wilfred Wheeler

December 8, 1943

I was interested to learn of the considerable demand for cut holly which you have been unable to fill. This year, for the first time, we have a heavy setting of berries on many of our little holly trees. We have sold many trees, but have many others which will be better for rather drastic pruning, so we shall have quite a quantity of cut holly which could be sold.

I am sending you samples of the prunings. I am rather troubled about the quality of the foliage; much of it is of poor color, largely due to the severe drought which we suffered in late summer and fall, but it may also be due to an insufficient supply of nitrogen to balance the heavy crop of berries. You will remember that our field is so uneven in quality, and wherever the rows cross slight ridges deficient in humus, the foliage is of poorer color.

I have sent similar samples to F. S. Pennock Company, wholesale florists in Philadelphia, but have not yet had time to hear from them. It is rather late to

begin negotiations for the Christmas market, but perhaps something can be accomplished.

A few weeks ago I had a visit from F. L. O'Rourke whom I think you know. He is connected with the Beltsville, Md., station and has paid much attention to the various strains of holly under cultivation. He told me that the "Howard" was selected by Dr. Hume and is, in his opinion, the most beautiful Ilex opaca that he knows. He also said that for some time this variety was thought to have perfect flowers; but while the stamens are there, they do not produce pollen. Mr. O'Rourke found that plantings of "Howard" did not produce many berries until a number of wild holly trees were set close to them. Among the wild holly trees were various staminate specimens which ripen their pollen a few days apart. Mr. O'Rourke expressed the opinion that in any holly planting there should be several strains of staminate plants, since no one strain could be depended upon to ripen its pollen in successive years during the few days that the pistillate flowers of any particular strain were in receptive condition. I hope this is not true, for it complicates the problem of securing good crops of berries.

Elizabeth C. White

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December 10, 1943

I wish I had some of your holly, for there is very little on the Cape this season. And the squirrels are eating the berries in a way I have never seen them do before. The ground under the trees which have fruited is covered with the outer skin of holly berries. I found one tree which had been stripped of its fruit. This local condition is made possible by the short crop of other food and the large number of red squirrels and field mice. The latter are eating the berries near the ground.

I came across something interesting the other day. On my advice last year, a man who had a fine holly tree which was not doing well, put his pigs in a pen about the tree. This year the color of the foliage and the fruit was the best I had ever seen on this tree. I know that hollies will stand all kinds of feeding; in fact, I shall

try hen manure on some of my trees this winter. It is not safe to apply it in the spring. This is old manure, still strong, and I plan an inch mulch around the trees. I saw good results in Rhode Island where the hollies were mulched with pig manure.

As for the "Howard" holly, I know it is not a pure I. opaca. It grew here just like an I. aquifolium; in one year it made a growth of 3 feet, which killed back, roots and all. I'm sure it is a hybrid. I understood from Batchelor that the original tree was in North Carolina.

I know O'Rourke quite well and we have had considerable correspondence. I don't know how much he knows about the problem of pollenization. In fact, I do not know anyone who does, for there are many things to explain in this direction. I wonder how he would explain that "St. Mary" and "St. Ann" trees have borne successive crops of berries for twelve years, and there is only one male tree on the Island! My opinion, after seeing the great quantities of insects which work on the pollen of the male trees, is that, unless the weather is so bad the insects cannot work, it would be impossible for a flower on the pistillate tree not to be fertilized.

I am glad to learn that Tingle says "Howard" is not hardy with him. I still think "Howard" would make a fine pot plant for a semi-cold greenhouse, but I am not interested in producing a plant which is not hardy. I think we are right in striving to get the best hardy hollies.

I am planning to send you in the spring the best of the selections I have made other than those you already have. If you have room for them in the greenhouse, I should be inclined to send them this winter, provided the ground does not freeze too quickly. By potting small plants in the fall and carrying them over in a cold greenhouse, I find they start much earlier and make new growth which is greater than that on plants left outdoors; in other words, they really make two years in one.

Wilfred Wheeler

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