

Ilex glabra Inkberry

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

This native* holly of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plains displays lustrous evergreen foliage, which, along with its adaptability to varying light and moisture conditions, makes it a desirable alternative to finicky boxwoods. Wildlife favor its fruit and honey bees its nectar.



| Shrub | Shrubs, Close-ups of Flowers, Fruit, Leaves |
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| Height: 6–10 feet |  |
| Spread: 6–12 feet | |
| Bloom Color: Greenish white | |
| Characteristics | |
| Evergreen with rounded to broad spreading form | |
| Dioecious: separate male and female plants | |
| Leathery, glossy, oval leaves, dark green above and lighter below, with finely toothed tips | |
| Small white flowers in May and June | |
| Small, black, berry-like drupes from September to March; male plant needed for females to bear fruit | |
| Spreads by root suckers to form colonies | |
| Attributes |   |
| Tolerates shade, dry soil, wet soil, some salt, air pollution, and rabbits; dislikes alkaline soil | |
| No serious pests or diseases but may develop leaf spot; deer seldom severely damage | |
| Gallberry honey produced from nectar | |
| Attracts bees to the nectar and 15 bird species and small mammals to the fruit; provides cover | |
| Growing and Maintenance Tips | Excellent Replacement for |
| Soil Requirements: Well-drained, acidic | <i>Barberis thunbergii</i> - Japanese Barberry |
| Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade | <i>Buxus species</i> - Boxwood |
| Water Requirements: Moist, Wet | <i>Ligustrum species</i> - Privets |
| Protect from harsh winter exposure; prune to shape in spring before new growth appears | <i>Viburnum dilatatum</i> - Linden Viburnum |
| Use as a border, hedge, or for erosion control | *In DE, it is common in the Coastal Plain. Its status in PA is extirpated. In VA, it is frequent to locally common in the south and central Coastal Plain; rare in the Piedmont; and not native to NoVA. |
| Hardiness: USDA Zones 5–9 | |

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, landscaping at Adventist HealthCare, Rockville, MD and private garden, Arlington, VA