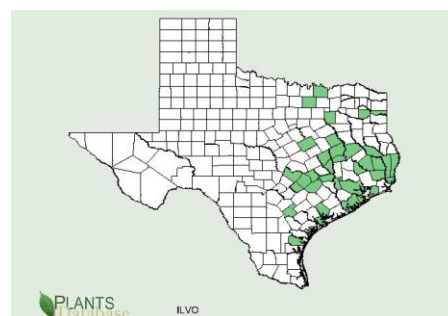
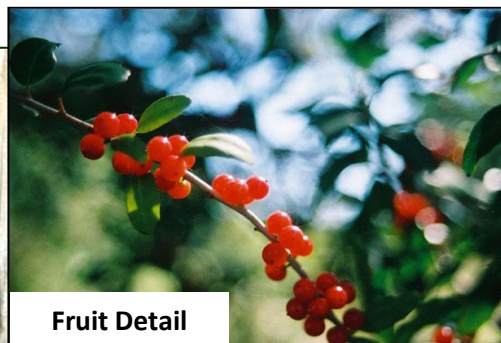


NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH JANUARY, 2013

YAUPON HOLLY, *ILEX VOMITORIA*



Yaupon Holly

USDA Range Map: Texas

Yaupon Holly is a large evergreen shrub or small tree, usually no taller than 25'. It occurs widely from central Texas east to southern Virginia and Florida. Admired for its bright red fruit in late fall and winter, it is one of the most commonly used native plants across Texas. Although it will tend to grow as a dense multi-trunked shrub, it can be trained as a tree with careful pruning. It is very adaptable and can grow in sun or shade and tolerates poor drainage as well as drought. Various selections are available in nurseries, including dwarf and weeping varieties. The red berries, which occur only on female plants, are eaten by birds but usually only after other food has been consumed. Since plants started from seed can be male or female, it is best to start new plants from cuttings of specimens known to have berries. It is moderately deer resistant.

Yaupon Holly is unique in that it is the only native holly in North America whose leaves contain caffeine. Native Americans living in regions where this holly grows were known to drink a tea made from the roasted leaves. This was sometimes part of a ceremonial purification ritual that included vomiting (hence the botanical name). Early European settlers in the southeast also drank the tea, which some described as similar to the more familiar tea from China or India. Interestingly, while the use of the Yaupon tea has fallen out of favor here, a similar tea known as Yerba Maté, made from a related South American holly (*Ilex paraquariensis*), is today a very popular drink in Uruguay and several other South American countries. (For more information, see "Remarkable Plants of Texas" by Matt Turner.)

Note: Yaupon Holly is a NPSOT NICE!™ selection for Winter 2012 - 2013