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Winter is prime time to view UT Arboretum's 200+ holly collection

By T. Wayne Waters Special to the News Sentinel
Posted December 22, 2011 at 5 p.m.

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Red berries are certainly best for Christmastime but holly berries can be orange, brown, or almost black.

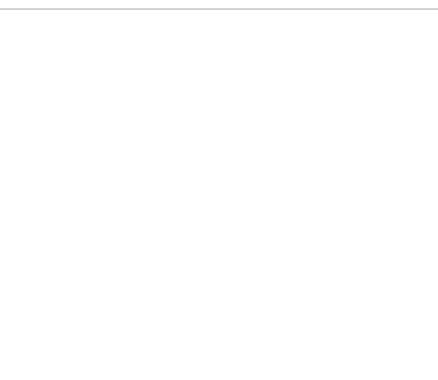
Holly Collection

Where: University of Tennessee Arboretum, also known as the Oak Ridge Forest and Arboretum, off Highway 62 at 901 South Illinois Avenue in Oak Ridge. The site has a visitors center and is also headquarters for the

Have a holly, jolly Christmas!The Harold L. Elmore Holly Collection at the UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge maintains a centuries-old appreciation for that most Christmasy of natural vegetation — green-leafed, red-berried holly.

Standing stately and festive on a prime hilltop spot at the 250-acre University of Tennessee Arboretum are more than 200 hand-picked holly specimens.

A yuletide favorite, holly isn't hard to come by this time of year. Holly wreaths, vines, bushes and trees can be



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University of Tennessee
Forest Resources
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Hours: Arboretum
grounds are open for
walking daily from 8 a.m.
until sunset. The Visitors
Center and office is open
8 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m.
Monday-Friday
(excluding holidays).

Info: 865-483-3571;
<http://forestry.tennessee.edu>;
<http://forestry.tennessee.edu/arbpage.htm>



Photos by T. Wayne
Waters/Special to the News
Sentinel The Harold L.
Elmore Holly Collection at the
University of Tennessee
Arboretum in Oak Ridge has
more than 200 species of
holly.

found in nurseries and a few residential yards. Artificial representations abound on Christmas wrapping paper, cards and clothing, as well as on holiday dinnerware and home décor items. But to see a varied bunch of colorful holly trees and bushes all together in one pretty outdoor spot is special.

"With the red berries and green leaves, hollies are wonderful decorations for Christmas," said Knoxvilleian Dennis Superczynski, chairman of the Holly Task Force for the Harold L. Elmore Holly Collection. "And this is the best time of year to see the holly berries. They turn red in the fall so it's spectacular right now."

Holly has warmed humankind's winter hearts for centuries. In ancient Celtic mythology, the Holly King supposedly ruled the world from the winter solstice, or Yule, until the summer solstice, and Celts decorated their homes with it during that time of year. Ancient Roman and Chinese civilizations used holly for decorative purposes during wintertime festivals and ceremonies.

Holly is part of the Aquifoliaceae family of flowering plants within the Ilex genus. Aquifoliaceae come in more than 400 species that include evergreen and deciduous trees, shrubs and climbers, typically having needle-point leaves with serrated edges and small berries that are usually red but range to orange, brown or black. The Harold L. Elmore Holly Collection has hollies native to Europe, Asia and the U.S., including many varieties

native to Tennessee.

The Arboretum's holly garden was named in 2004 for longtime Knoxville resident Harold Elmore, the late volunteer extraordinaire who dedicated considerable effort to promoting the hardy plant. A stone pillar was erected there in his honor in 2010, and three plaques are embedded in the structure noting, respectively, Elmore's contributions, the naming of the garden for him, and recognition of the site as an "Official Holly Arboretum" by the Holly Society of America.

"The Holly Task Force maintains the collection, which involves everything from picking up debris, mulching, fertilizing and pruning, and adds new hollies to it every year," noted Superczynski, who is also the treasurer for the New Jersey-based Holly Society of America, Inc. "We just planted 21 new holly varieties last month."

'Mr. Holly'

Etowah, Tenn., native Harold Elmore was a holly enthusiast and horticulturalist nationally recognized as an expert on holly hybrids. Elmore served several terms as University of Tennessee Arboretum Society president and in the same capacity for the Holly Society of America. It was at his suggestion that UT Arboretum established The Holly Garden in 1984. The garden would be named after him in 2004.

Elmore owned and operated Holly Haven Hybrids nursery during these years at his five-acre farm in Knox County. It has been reported he had more than 800 holly cultivars and provided



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the UT Arboretum's holly garden with quite a few of them. So thoroughly was he associated with the festive ornamental plants that he was known as "Mr. Holly." Elmore died in December 2002.

Source: "A Tribute to 'Mr. Holly,' Harold L. Elmore," by Dennis Superczynski



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