

1-20 *Ilex* [*aquifolium* 'Lewis' x (*cornuta* x *pernyi*) 'John T. Morris'] 'Irish Eyes' Female

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The original plant germinated as a chance seedling, beneath the female *Ilex aquifolium* 'Lewis' on his property in Bear, Delaware during the summer of 2008. The seedling showed exceptionally dark green and glossy foliage, and because of its promising appearance was dug and moved to a container in October 2008. It has since been planted in the landscape at the edge of a wooded area. The name 'Irish Eyes' was chosen in reference to the deep green color of the plant's foliage. The male parent of 'Irish Eyes' is presumed to be a nearby *Ilex cornuta* x *pernyi* 'John T. Morris', which bloomed heavily and with an overlapping blooming period to that of 'Lewis' in the preceding years. Assuming this to be correct, the proposed name of the hybrid would be: *Ilex* [*aquifolium* 'Lewis' x (*cornuta* x *pernyi*) 'John T. Morris'] 'Irish Eyes'.

The original parent plant is an evergreen, conical shrub, currently 1.8 m (68 in) tall and 1.3 m (52 in) wide, with a trunk diameter of 3.8 cm (1.5 in) at eleven years old. The plant also displays a herringbone branching habit.

The leaves of 'Irish Eyes' are obovate/quadrangular, up to 5.1 cm (2 in) long and 3.5 cm (1 3/8 in) wide. Margins in top view are spinose, typically with two sharp spines per side. In side view, the leaves are slightly convex. Apices are acute, with a sharp apical spine of 1 mm (1/32 in), with the tip moderately reflexed. The bases are rounded. Leaves are coriaceous, very glossy, and a deep green color, Green Group N137A on the Royal Hort Society Colour Chart of 2007, but this color may darken further during the cold winter months. Petioles are 4 mm (3/16 in) long.

The plant bears pistillate flowers with 4 yellowish-white petals and 4 underdeveloped stamens each, fasciculate, and borne in leaf axils on 2nd year growth. Flowering typically begins in April in Zone 7a and is therefore early in the holly flowering season. *Ilex* males with overlapping blooming periods include *I. cornuta* x *pernyi* and *I. x merserveae* hybrids, as well as *I. cornuta* and *I. aquifolium*.

After flowering, the pistils of 'Irish Eyes' enlarge to become globose drupes, which ripen in November to a glossy fruit of a bright red color, Red Group 44B on the Royal Hort Society Colour Chart of 2007. Fruits are globose, rounded in both cross-sectional and longitudinal view,

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and measure 8 mm (5/16 in) in diameter, on peduncles which are 5 mm (3/16 in) long. Fruits are typically borne in groups of three, in dense clusters up to 10 cm (4 in) long along the stem. Fruiting often begins in the first year of rooted cuttings.

Annual growth of about 15 cm (6 in) on the leader and on lateral branch tips is typical.

The plant has been grown in Zone 7a with no winter damage, but has not been fully evaluated for hardiness in colder zones.

'Irish Eyes' was selected based on its distinctively dark and glossy foliage, accented with bright red fruits. The leaf size is intermediate between that of *I. aquifolium* 'Lewis' and *I. cornuta* x *pernyi* 'John T. Morris', the putative parents.

In comparison to *I. cornuta* x *pernyi* hybrids ('Lydia Morris', John T. Morris', 'Doctor Kassab' and 'Hugger'), the leaves of 'Irish Eyes' are darker and somewhat larger, and the apical spines are less reflexed. The leaf shape and size of 'Irish Eyes' are somewhat similar to 'Pernella', another putative hybrid of *I. aquifolium* and *I. cornuta* x *pernyi*, but the leaves of 'Irish Eyes' are glossier and a darker color.

Voucher specimens are on deposit in the herbarium of the U. S. National Arboretum (NA), Washington, D.C. 20002.