

6-19 *Ilex cornuta* 'Charlie's China Dean'

Male

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In 1985, the Holly Society of America helped to fund a U.S. National Arboretum-led plant exploration trip to South Korea, and Dr. Willard T. Witte of the University of Tennessee was designated to receive the HSA's portion of the expedition's germplasm. As a result Dr. Witte received small seedlings of *I. cornuta* collected from a schoolyard on the Pyonsan Peninsula on the southwest coast of Chollapuk-Do Province. The female parent plant of these seedlings was documented as having been dug from the population of the northernmost stand of *I. cornuta* in South Korea. These seedlings were grown in a greenhouse at the University of Tennessee, and cuttings of surviving plants were taken in the summer of 1986. Some of the small rooted cuttings, numbered CH-1 to CH-129, were distributed to participants of the Holly Society Annual Meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, in October 1986 (see Holly Society Journal 6 (1): 11-14 (1988) and Holly Society Journal 19 (1): 11-15 (2001)). Charles Anderson received a cutting labeled CH-122, which he grew at his home in Owings Mills, Maryland. After sprigs of CH-122 won first place in numerous sprig contests, Charles named the plant 'China Dean' (communication from Charles Anderson, January 23, 2013). The original plants from the CH-series in Tennessee have been bulldozed by the University. And there are no patent or intellectual property restrictions pertaining to the plant (communication from Willard Witte, July 22, 2018).

The oldest existing plant in Charles Anderson's collection is mounded, very dense multi-stemmed shrub, 4 m (13 ft) tall and 4 m (13 ft) wide. The trunk is 33 cm (13 in) in diameter at the base. The plant displays a horizontal branching habit. Average annual growth is about 20 cm (8 in).

The leaf texture is coriaceous, while the leaves are keeled, very glossy on the upper surface, and glabrous. They are oblong to quadrangular in shape, with the largest leaves 5.5 cm (2 1/8 in) long and 3.5 cm (1 3/8 in) wide. The bases are truncate to slightly rounded. Margins are convex in side view and spinose in top view, typically with 2 (rarely 3) spines per side. Apices are

acuminate, strongly recurved, and the tip spine is 2 mm (1/16 in) long. Petioles are up to 3 mm (1/8 in) long. Upper leaf surfaces are a deep green in color, Green Group 137 A on the RHS Colour Chart of 2007.

(2)

Unlike many other *Ilex cornuta* selections, 'Charlie's China Dean' is not observed to exhibit heterophylly, i.e. all leaves appear uniformly spinose.

The plant bears staminate flowers with 4 yellowish-white petals and 4 stamens each, fasciculate and borne in leaf axils on 2nd year growth. Flowering typically begins in mid-to-late April in Zone 7a and is therefore early in the holly flowering season. Flowering is consistently heavy and the plant appears to be an excellent pollenizer for *Ilex* females with overlapping blooming periods, including *I. cornuta x pernyi* and *I. x meserveae* hybrids, as well as *I. cornuta* itself.

The plant also produces a few perfect flowers, each with 4 pollen-bearing stamens arranged around a small pistil. These perfect flowers rarely transform into very small, oblong or misshapen, red fruit, as has been observed in several *I. cornuta* males (see Holly Society Journal 34(1): 4 (2016)).

Plants have been grown from rooted cuttings by William Kuhl of McLean Nurseries, and offered for sale (initially labeled 'CH-122') since at least the early 2000s. Plants have also been donated for auction at the Holly Society's annual meeting plant sales.

Long-term survival in Zone 6b/7a has been demonstrated, with a recorded low temperature of -24 degrees C (-12 degrees F) in January 1994 causing no damage.

'Charlie's China Dean' was selected based on its handsome, glossy foliage, dense growth habit forming attractive sprigs, and abundant flowering properties, in addition to its long-term hardiness in Zone 6b/7a.

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