

Dwarf Yaupon Holly - *Ilex vomitoria nana*

General information: The botanical name for this particular specie of holly is *Ilex vomitoria nana* or *Dwarf Yaupon Holly*. It is one of eleven hollies native to Florida. It usually grows as a shrub but occasionally may be found as a tree. Its foliage consists of dark green evergreen oval to egg-shaped leaves. Female varieties of this holly bear fruit in the fall which is red and are only about 1/4" in diameter.

Ilex vomitoria nana is available from nurseries and garden centers. It is often confused with a couple of close relatives. One is *Ilex Shillings* which does not grow native but has adapted well to the SE USA. The other is *Ilex myrtifolia* or myrtle-leaved holly. *Ilex vomitoria nana* may also be found growing in the wild and may be collected in early Spring. They may be grown from seed or from soft wood cuttings.

The portion of the name of the plant, "Vomitoria", is a rather unsavory name given to a very nice and useful plant. The early settlers in the SE USA learned from the indians that the leaves of this plant could be used to make tea. The indians used the leaves to prepare their ceremonial black drink by drying the leaves until they are black and crumbly, then steeping in hot water. However, if the leaves are used without going through the drying process they produced a memorable reaction on the human digestive system. Hence the addition of "vomitoria" to its name. "Nana" is a common horticultural suffix meaning, "dwarf".

Lighting: It will grow in full shade to full sun, but the more light it has the more dense its foliage will be.

Temperature: Will tolerate short term freezing.

Watering: It does not like to remain dry for a very long period of time.

Feeding: It should be given half strength liquid fertilizer every two or three weeks. It prefers an evenly balanced (20 20-20) fertilizer but is not too choosy.

Pruning and wiring: Its new growth shows a strong tendency to upwards growth and must either be wired horizontal or pruned to retain shape. When pruned it will burst forth profusely with new thick growth throughout the growing season.

Propagation: Cuttings.

Repotting: It is not particular about the type of soil it has.

Pests and disases: The only pest which seems to attack the *Ilex vomitoria nana* is the leaf miner. It is a very small creature which literally mines the interior of leaves, leaving a black trail where it has eaten the nutrients. Infestations can be prevented with a preventive spray of a systemic insecticide. (A systemic insecticide is one which enters the system of the plant and remains active there for an extended period of time, killing any

sucking type of insect.) If a leaf becomes infected with a leaf miner, it will never repair itself and should be removed.

Bibliography:

"Yaupon (Ilex vomitoria)" by John Woodham, Florida Bonsai, XIV, 2:14-15.

"Aquifoliaceae" by Jeff Ketts, Florida Bonsai, XXI, 4:11-12.

Florida Bonsai XVIII:1:27

Watkins, "Florida Landscape Plants" p.243

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