

Ilex glabra

inkberry

Aquifoliaceae



Credit: Mack Thetford, UF/IFAS

Inkberry is found throughout Florida and more broadly west to Texas and northeast to the Canadian border. Fruits attract birds and other wildlife but are not edible to humans. Flowers attract pollinators, including honey bees. Plant male and female plants in order to sustain fruit production.

General Description

Inkberry is a colonial, evergreen shrub that can reach heights of 3 to 6 ft. *Leaves* are alternate and simple, growing from 0.75 to 3 in long. They have dark green upper surfaces and powdery pubescent petioles. Leaf margins are entire or they may have up to 6 rounded serrations or notches toward the apices and the apices will have a tiny point. *Inflorescences*

are borne in the leaf axils and appear in spring. They are clusters of white flowers that grow 5 to 8 mm in diameter. The species is dioecious with pistillate and staminate flowers occurring on separate plants. *Fruits* contain 5 to 8 nutlets. They are shiny black spherical drupes 5 to 8 mm in diameter. Fruits often persist through winter.

Propagation

The authors have had much success producing inkberry from seed of wild-collected fruits. Fruit can be harvested in January and cleaned seed sown in open flats or in 72-cell flats after moist, cool stratification (40 days at 4.5° C) to overcome seed dormancy associated with immature embryos. Germination may occur over an extended period; seedlings are grown for 4 months before they are transplanted to larger pots.

Outplanting

Plants grown in 3-gal treepots with ½-inch screened composted pinebark had 2 to 6 times greater outplanting survival and were 1.5 times larger after 15 months than plants grown in 1-gal pots (Thetford et al. 2005). Outplanting should be done with protection of a foredune ridge above a meter or at least 466 ft from the Gulf mean high tide line.

Literature Cited

Thetford, M., D. Miller, K. Smith, and M. Schneider.
2005. "Container size and planting zone influence on transplant survival and growth of two coastal plants." *HortTechnology*. 15(3):554–549.

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