How to Plant Containerized Trees

Trees from nurseries are often potted in a container. These instructions are for planting containerized trees.

1. Dig a hole the same depth of the container and 3 to 4 times wider than the container. The hole should have sloping sides like a saucer to allow for proper root growth.

2. Lay the tree on its side and carefully remove the tree from the container, keeping the soil around the roots intact. It helps to tap the outside of the container to loosen the edge. Carefully slide the tree from the container. Don’t yank the tree out of the container as this can separate the roots from the tree.

3. Sometimes containerized trees become root-bound or the roots look like they’re about to circle the root ball. If your tree is like this, cut an X across the bottom of the root ball and four vertical slices along the sides of the root ball with a sharp knife.

4. Set the tree in the middle of the hole. Avoid planting the tree too deep. If the root collar sits below the top of the hole, compact some soil under the tree so that the root flare at the base of the trunk is slightly above ground level. Using some soil, secure the tree in a straight position, then fill and firmly pack the hole with the original soil, making sure there aren’t any air pockets. Keep backfilling until the soil is just below the root collar.

5. Create a water-holding basin around the hole and give the tree a good watering. After the water has soaked in, spread protective mulch 2-4 inches deep in a 3-foot diameter area around the base of the tree, but not touching the trunk.

6. The soil and mulch around your trees should be kept moist but not soggy. During dry weather, generously water the tree every 7 to 10 days during the first year. Water slowly at the dripline.

7. Remove any tags and labels from the tree as these will affect the tree as it grows. You may need to prune any broken or dead branches. (Please refer to the arborday.org pruning guide.)

Fertilizer? DO NOT use fertilizer, potting soil, or chemicals on your newly planted trees. Such products will kill your young trees.

Watering: Keeping your trees watered is important during their first year. Keep the soil and mulch moist but not soggy. In dry weather, you should water generously every 7 to 10 days. The water should soak into the soil and mulch. Avoid watering so much that you see standing water.

For step by step videos and more planting info go to arborday.org/HowToPlant
**Ilex cassine**: Dahoon Holly

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, Andrew K. Koeser, Deborah R. Hilbert, and Drew C. McLean

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### Introduction

Attractive when tightly clipped into a tall screen or allowed to grow naturally into its single-trunked, small tree form, dahoon holly is ideal for a variety of landscape settings. Capable of reaching 40 feet in height, dahoon holly is usually seen at a height of 20 to 30 feet with an 8 to 12-foot spread. The smooth, supple, shiny dark green, evergreen leaves, two to three inches long, have just a few serrations near the tip. Possessing male and female flowers on separate plants, at least two dahoon hollies (male and female) must be planted in the landscape to ensure production of the brilliant red berries in fall and winter. The berries serve as an excellent food source for wildlife but are far less prevalent than on East palatka or Fosters holly.

### General Information

**Scientific name**: *Ilex cassine**  
**Pronunciation**: EYE-lecks kuh-SIGH-nee  
**Common name(s)**: Dahoon holly  
**Family**: Aquifoliaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones**: 7A through 11 (Figure 2)  
**Origin**: native to the southeastern United States  
**UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status**: native  
**Uses**: hedge; screen; specimen; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; reclamation; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; Bonsai; highway median; container or planter

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department; Ryan W. Klein, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department; Andrew K. Koeser, assistant professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; Deborah R. Hilbert, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC; and Drew C. McLean, biological scientist, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Description
Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 8 to 12 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular
Crown shape: pyramidal, oval
Crown density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire, serrate
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), oblong
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: dark green and shiny on top, paler green underneath
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: male—greenish white; female—white
Flower characteristics: not showy; male—emerges in branched clusters; female—emerges solitary or in clusters
Flowering: late spring to early summer

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: ¼ inch
Fruit covering: fleshy drupes
Fruit color: yellow, orange, or red
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns
Bark: dark gray, thin, and smooth, becoming scaly with age
Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Ilex cassine: Dahoon Holly
**Other**

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** no  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

Growing well in full sun to partial shade, dahoon holly does best on moist soils since the wet, boggy soils of swamps is its native environment. Dahoon holly can tolerate drier locations with some watering, but often has a thin crown in this environment. It is not recommended in the southern part of its range in a dry, exposed site unless irrigation is provided. It lends itself well to use as a specimen or street tree, and is ideal for naturalizing in moist locations. Little pruning is needed to create a well-structured, strong tree. It appears to adapt well to the confined spaces of urban and downtown landscapes and is tolerant of some salt spray. The crown is fuller in full sun.

*Ilex cassine* var. *angustifolia*, Alabama dahoon, has narrower, more linear leaves than the species and more abundant but smaller berries. *Ilex myrtifolia* has smaller leaves and fruit, and its cultivar `Lowei` has yellow berries and dark green foliage.

Propagation is by seeds, which germinate in one year, or by cuttings. Cuttings are preferred since they give plants of a known sex and also root easily.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. A twig gall sometimes forms in response to a fungus infection. Mites can infest foliage on trees planted on dry sites.

**References**


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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** full sun to partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; wet to well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

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*Figure 5. Fruit—*Ilex cassine*: Dahoon holly*  
*Figure 6. Bark—*Ilex cassine*: Dahoon holly*  
*Credits: Gitta Hasing*