

When the Atlanta botanist was quite old, he moved to Dallas, Ga., where he boarded with a couple who cared for him as he became more and more feeble. He lived to be 90.

The popularity of Burfordi holly is well deserved because it has many virtues. Its thick emerald green leaves are as shiny and as deeply colored as the Southern magnolia. Although many hollies like cold climates, this variety seems well content with the sunny South. It is easy to please and requires little water, fertilizer or pruning. It has no soil preferences. Large plants, even without fertilizer, will sometimes send out runners 12 feet long in a year. A plant hardens enough new growth in the pre-holiday season to allow trimmed branches to be used in Christmas decorations. The limbs arch, often to the ground, under the weight of quantities of large reddish-orange berries. In the spring, tiny greenish-white flowers fill in the spaces between the leaves. The berries that follow are green until November when they turn yellow, then red.

"Although the plant is easy to grow once it is established," says Mr. Lilly, "you need a green thumb to propagate it."

He himself doesn't claim to have a green thumb for Burfordi holly and says that he considers rooting two or three cuttings out of 100 is average. Some Atlantians, he says, boast a higher rooting ratio and in Virginia, 10 plants from 100 cuttings is a good rate.

Burfordi is a year-round favorite of flower arrangers because of its beauty. Unlike most other hollies, it is kind to the hands of the arranger because its

leaves bend backwards, keeping the prickly points away from tender fingers. And the stems grow in wonderful shapes. On a single medium-sized bush you can find branches that are straight, curved, arched, bunched and S-shaped.

Someday there may be another new Atlanta holly. Mr. Lilly is now watching with great interest two seedlings which, unlike any other holly known, are apparently a cross between *Ilex Burfordi* and *Ilex opaca*, the native American holly.

*Ilex Burfordi* itself does not look like a cross with any of our native hollies. Its round and oval-shaped leaves have points that vary in number from one to seven on the same bush. Several authoritative books list it as *Ilex cornuta*, a variety of Chinese holly, but apparently no one knows its origin. If Mr. Burford did, he never told. He would sometimes mention his "six plants" but would not elaborate. Again, he would say he brought a box of berries with him to Georgia. Some people claim the berries were mailed to him from England and that he crossed these plants with a little-known holly.

Regardless of its origin, Burfordi holly is here to stay. Although Thomas W. Burford lived and died in obscurity, his name is known to thousands. He made a real contribution to his adopted country and particularly to the South by giving it a little more beauty and a thriving industry for nurserymen without charging for his service. His "children" brighten many yards and gardens.

Who knows? Maybe this quiet, shy and mild-mannered man planned it that way.

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