

Oscar's Dwarf Yaupon Holly



Ilex vomitoria 'Oscar's Dwarf'

- **Use:** This is the most compact of any *Ilex vomitoria* on the market. It is a male as is 'Schillings,' but it has half or less of the growth rate. When one really wants a tough plant that won't overgrow its place in the landscape, this is the one. This selection is a great substitute for boxwood when one is dealing with soils with poor drainage. It is one of the toughest species that I we know. It would be great for edging or in a parterre garden design as well as being one of the best of the evergreen hollies to develop into a bonsai.
- **Exposure/Soil:** Full sun to deep shade, though it will produce more fruit and have a thicker canopy with more sun. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil types and can withstand drought, salt spray, and occasional flooding. This plant can take heavy pruning, transplants easily, and is resistant to Phytophthora root rot.
- **Growth:** Slow growing; reaches 2 to 3 ft. tall, 4 ft. wide.
- **Hardiness:** Zone 7a-9b, Shrub
- **Foliage:** Evergreen. The leaves are small, leathery and bright green and are not prickly like other hollies. Very young stems are purplish in color and turn silvery-gray as they age. The leaves are dark green and small, usually less than 1 1/2 in. long. The pale gray bark is marked with white patches.
- **Flower:** As a male it has no berries.

The leaves and twigs contain caffeine, and American Indians used them to prepare a tea, which they drank in large quantities ceremonially and then vomited back up, lending the plant its species name, vomitoria. The vomiting was self-induced or because of other ingredients added; it doesn't actually cause vomiting. Tribes from the interior traveled to the coast in large numbers each spring to partake of this tonic, and it was also a common hospitality drink among many groups. It remained popular as such among southeastern Americans into the 20th century and is still occasionally consumed today, with a flavor resembling another holly drink, the South American yerba mate, from *Ilex paraguariensis*.

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