

Many (actually all) of my gardener friends and acquaintances love to collect plants. I recently had cause to covet a plant called Ilex meserveae 'Blue Boy' or Blue Boy Holly in the garden of Master Gardener John Mikesell. John has created a hedge combined of male and female plants of this delightful evergreen broadleaf shrub. His plants are quite petite at present but Blue Boy will grow to six or seven feet making a great hedge requiring very little pruning if at all. Blue Boy likes sun or partial shade (a great choice for our climate).

I have several variegated dwarf Ilex in my garden too but I have, alas, lost the tag identifying the cultivar. Isn't that the way of gardening sometimes? One always has the best intentions but in the organization and recordkeeping department we sometimes fail horribly.

One more comment on Ilex, in my Internet searching to find out the name of my forgotten Ilex I found a site with the plant Ilex vomitoria (or Yaupon holly). Did you know the word "vomitoria" means this particular plant is poisonous? Actually, the berries are the poisonous part of the plant but the site says, "The young leaves may be picked, browned and dried in an oven, steeped in hot water and used to make Yaupon tea. It contains caffeine." You won't have to worry about being poisoned by this plant though because it grows in North Carolina. Just thought you'd enjoy a small bit of plant trivia while we were on the subject of Ilex.

I was searching the Internet to come up with some plants to recommend for hedging and edging and I happened upon the Monrovia site. If you've shopped any of our local nurseries and garden centers you've most likely found some enticing plants with a Monrovia tag attached. While you're waiting for the rain to subside key in [www.monrovia.com](http://www.monrovia.com) and peruse the site for temptations for planting in 2003.

My first choice as a must have for my garden this year is Coprosma 'Rainbow Surprise.' It's an evergreen shrub with shiny leaves in variegated shades of cream, green, pink and gold. The description promises that the plant leaves turn hot pink to red and olive green in autumn remaining that way throughout winter and early spring. The shrub will spread to five feet and can be pruned or left to grow naturally. Monrovia describes it as "ideal for container plantings" too. It likes full to partial sun. I want this plant.

Nurseries in our area listed on the Monrovia website are: Valley Nursery, Sack's Feed and Garden, Bainbridge Gardens, Country Nursery and Gardens, Savage Plants, Bay Hay and Feed, Port Orchard Nursery, Peninsula Garden Center (Gig Harbor) and Rosedale Gardens (Gig Harbor). Monrovia also supplies brochures with tips and plant lists for several theme plantings such as attract birds and tropical gardens. Most nurseries carry these helpful pamphlets.

I thought I'd surf the web for more hedging plants, used my favorite search engine google.com and found a site by the "Anglian Gardener" at [www.angliangardener.co.uk/plants/hedging%20plants.htm](http://www.angliangardener.co.uk/plants/hedging%20plants.htm). This is an excellent site if you're researching the best hedging materials. The site lists the pros and cons of hedges and fences offering ideas to best suit needs.

The site speaks to one of my favorite pet peeves – using Leyland cypress, Cupressocyparis leylandii as a hedge. The reason I'm saddened when seeing rows of Leyland cypress marching along a property line is that so many times these tree-like hedging plants are pruned to remain short and compact. In most cases the Leyland's have been chopped in half or have whacked off branches six or more inches in diameter. This is not a great thing to do to these elegantly formed wonderful small trees.

There are so many choices better suited for hedging than Leyland cypress. Now, having said that, along Pioneer Hill Road (which I drive every day) there is a stretch of Leylands which will never be pruned and are quite

perfect and elegant in that situation. My apologies to all those gardeners and designers who swear by using Leyland cypress as hedges. That's the best thing about gardeners, they agree unanimously on very little.