

Holly Sky Pencil Care

Light

Many gardeners in the North find that the plant performs best in [full sun](#). This narrow, columnar shrub is listed as a bush that tolerates shade. While the plant will probably survive if located in shade, its growth may be slower and its branching not quite as dense.

But, in the north, avoid growing it on the east side or north side of a house (where there will be more shade than there will be on the south side or west side).

Soil

The plant will grow best in well-drained soil. You can promote good drainage in the ground that you are planting in by spading in compost. The soil should be allowed neither to become too wet nor too dry. This shrub prefers a [soil pH](#) that is more [acidic](#).

Water

Water your sky pencil holly regularly to help the root system become well established. As a good rule of thumb, check soil surrounding your tree to make sure it is moist, but not soggy. If the leaves become pale green in color this could be an indication that too much water is present in the soil. Apply two to four inches of organic mulch over the root zone to help keep the soil moist.

Fertilizer

Fertilize your sky pencil holly tree once annually with a slow-release fertilizer—best if in the spring.

Growing in Containers

Sky pencil holly shrubs grow well in containers. Unlike other types of holly shrubs, you do not have to worry about prickly leaves when moving it around.

Pruning

Fortunately, this columnar shrub retains its unique shape without pruning. If you feel like being fussier with your pruning, you could pinch the tips off as many branches as you can. This care causes the shrub to become bushier. [Winter is a good time to prune this holly](#), although it is not the only possible time to prune it.

Another item on your winter-care checklist should be to wrap cords or twine (you can use bungee cords) around the shrub in a few places so as to pull the branches into the center. This will help you avoid the damage caused by having heavy snow or ice buildup on the branches.

Landscaping

Sky pencil hollies could work well as a privacy barrier. Alternatively, where the goal along a border is simply to provide definition rather than privacy, a row of these narrow bushes could form an attractive "colonnade" of sorts. The shrub has an interesting enough shape to stand alone and serve as a [specimen plant](#), too. When landscaping for small spaces, this is a great narrow shrub that injects vertical interest.

Many homeowners also find these shrubs useful in [foundation plantings](#). Columnar shrubs are often placed at the corners of such planting beds. But a pair of sky pencil hollies would also be a logical choice flanking a [house entry](#) (placed on either side of the door). You could use them in the same fashion at the entrance to a driveway.

This shrub is generally considered to be a slow grower. In fact, for many gardeners, it grows so slowly during the first few years that you may start to question whether you might be stuck with a shrub too small for your needs. But the growth rate will pick up once the shrub is established.