



PERSIMMON

JUST FRUITS & EXOTICS

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INTRODUCTION

Persimmons are still something of a rarity in the U.S., but those in the know agree that there is no more beautiful sight than a group of golden persimmons ripening to sweet perfection on a sunny windowsill. The smooth, custard-textured flesh closely resembles maple-flavored jelly. Enjoy persimmons fresh or use them in any number of desserts and breads. Dried, they taste like chewy papaya.

The trees, very hardy and well adapted to our area, are known to live upwards of 75 years. They require little attention once established. Over 500 varieties have been developed throughout Asia, with fruit ranging from plum-size to football-size, with many flavors and textures. We've narrowed the range to what we think are the very best varieties.

There are two basic types of persimmon fruit: astringent (puckery) and non-astringent (non-puckery). Astringent varieties turn orange and look ripe long before they are ready to eat and should be eaten only when completely jelly-soft to the touch. Non-astringent persimmons may be eaten while still firm and crisp. As a group, the astringent varieties are sweeter, richer and juicier, while the non-astringent types are crisp, mellow and more sugarcane- or cantaloupe-flavored. Our trees are grafted on American Persimmon *Diospyros virginiana*.

USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Persimmons are one of the loveliest trees to be found. They have smooth gray-to-tan bark, and broad, leathery, jade-green leaves (2-3 inches wide and 4-6 inches long). The large varieties average 25 to 30 feet at maturity, a good size for lining driveways and paths, or as a specimen or accent tree.

The small trees are usually very heavy bearers and are great in small groups in the shrubbery border, with low annuals or groundcover beneath them. All persimmons have spectacular fall colors - bright yellows to clear oranges, light pinks to fire-engine reds - and the whole show happens just as the fruit colors up!

PLANTING AND CULTURE

SITE SELECTION

Well-drained, sandy loam soils are preferred, but persimmons will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Persimmon will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Avoid frost pockets - trees may be damaged by unseasonable frosts

SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

Dig a planting hole at least twice as big as the pot and twice as deep. Enrich the planting hole with compost, pine bark, or aged manure, mixed with the soil dug from the hole (50:50 mix). Mushroom compost, mixed with pine bark or rotted leave, is an excellent soil amendment for persimmon.

Remove the persimmon from the pot, gently loosen the root ball, cut any roots that swirl around the edges of the root ball, and place in the planting hole. The persimmon should be planted at the same level at which it grew in its pot. Fill the hole with the mix of soil and organic matter and gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. We suggest weed-free hay or pine bark as mulch.

Spacing for persimmons depends upon the desired use in the landscape. Trees should be a minimum of 10 foot apart for small growers and 20 feet apart for large growers.

FERTILIZATION AND FRUIT DROP

Fruit drop is a common problem for persimmons in the South. High nitrogen fertilizer or uneven watering patterns can cause this problem. Some varieties are more prone to fruit drop when young, but grow out of it with age.

We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Citrus Tone is a good choice for persimmon trees. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 5-2-6. Make sure they contain iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to type and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Be sure to spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 2-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in.

For young trees (years 1 and 2) and in Zones 8a-9, fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July/early August. For plants further north (Zones 6-7), fertilize 2 times each year in March and June/July. This will likely cause fruit drop, but growth is more important at this stage in their development. Never fertilize after August (July in Zones 6-7) as this will promote new growth when the plant needs to go dormant.

On the third year, switch to a low nitrogen fertilizer (first number must be less than 5) and apply only in February (Zones 8-9) or March (Zones 6-7).

WATER

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new persimmon. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply. Established persimmons should receive at least 1 inch of water each week. Water regularly,

especially during dry periods. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the persimmon clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients. Mulch this area in spring and summer with 4-6 inches of mulch.

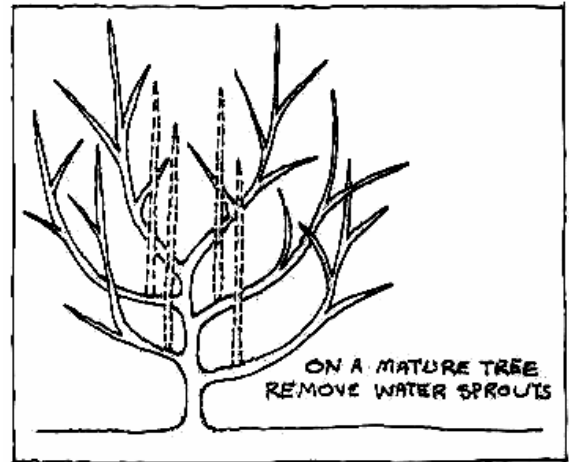
PRUNING

Persimmons in the South are usually pruned to an open center habit. At planting select 3-4 scaffold branches spaced equally around the trunk and remove other branches flush with the trunk.

In the second dormant season, top the scaffold limbs approximately 36 inches from the trunk to encourage secondary branching. Remove any strong branches growing into the center. You want the tree to have good air circulation in the interior.

Continue to train persimmon trees during the first 5 years. Pruning should be designed to train the tree outward by removing strong branches growing into the center and removing water sprouts. The tree can be topped out at 7 or 8 foot with mold and hold cuts, which are devigorating heading cuts made into two year old wood. Do this by topping back the main scaffold limb to a weaker outward growing shoot. This will keep the tree at an easy picking height as well as stimulate new growth lower on the tree.

Mature trees are pruned during the dormant season. Thin out weak branches and head back long shoots as needed to maintain tree shape. Remove water sprouts. Remove any dead, damaged or diseased branches when pruning. Use mold and hold cuts to maintain trees to an easy picking height.



VARIETY LIST – FOR MORE VARIETIES GO TO OUR WEBSITE

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Astringent (Eat when mushy) **Varieties** (*Diospyros kaki*).

GIOMBO Huge 5 inch fruit are as big as softballs. Fantastic quality, smooth texture and very sweet. Ripens early October to early November.

HACHIYA Medium size deep red fruit will hang on trees throughout winter. Rated as one of the best for flavor and the perfect jelly-like consistency of the fruit. Ripens mid October to late Dec.

HAO RIVER Another new persimmon that is one of the most popular in China (native country of persimmons, where they are often dried and made into candy). This large sugar-sweet persimmon is early ripening, and a bright orange color.

PATAPSCO A cold hardy introduction from Maryland. A yellow fruit that ripens in October. Long-holding under refrigeration (through January!) and reliable to at least zone 6. Ripens mid November.

SMITH'S BEST Dwarf, compact persimmon that was found growing in J. Russell Smith's homestead in Front Royal, VA. Mr. Smith wrote "Tree Crops: A Permanent Agriculture" and was an economist, geographer who saw that trees were important for food and soil preservation. Ripens late October to mid November.

TANENASHI A rounded tree which is a prolific producer of medium-sized round to cone-shaped orange-red fruits. The flesh is yellow when ripe and very sweet. Great for homeowners with limited space because of a prolonged harvest season. Ripens September into November.

GREAT WALL Our most ornamental variety, Great Wall has an interesting tall, pointed shape and turns a brilliant shade of cherry pink in the fall. The fruit is sunset orange with thick, rich flesh. Ripens late September to mid-October.

LINDY'S GIANT The largest of all persimmons. Huge fruits are up to 7 inches long with excellent flavor. Ripens early October.

SAIJO Originally from Japan, Saijo means "sweet" in Japanese. The fruits are like small orange balls of honey. Consistent bearer. Trees are large, upright, and vigorous. One of the first fruits of the season, it starts bearing in September and continues into October.

SHENG The most beautiful persimmon of all! The bright orange fruit is flat, has six prominent lobes, and is ribbed and tucked in around the calyx, shaped just like a miniature pumpkin. The medium-sized trees bear good crops consistently. Ripens mid-September through early October.

Non-astringent (Eat when firm & crunchy) Varieties (*Diospyros kaki*)

FUYU By far the most popular of this group, Fuyu is a heavy producer of fist-sized, tomato-shaped fruits. Crisp, sweet, and mild, it is the one that most reminds us of cantaloupe. The fruit can begin to be harvested as soon as the color comes up, usually around late October, and can remain on the tree for as long as two months.

GIANT HANAFUYU HUGE, brilliant, reddish-orange fruit. The trees are very small, a good choice for patios and smaller gardens. Giant Hanafuyu has an excellent flavor, rich and sweet. Ripens in September and October.

ICHI-KI-KEI-JIRO Dwarf tree produces large, flat, tomato-shaped, deep orange fruit. A bud sport of Jiro, it is one of the most cold hardy. Ripens in late October.

IZU One of the first crunchy persimmons to ripen. Large tomato-shaped fruit with a cinnamon sweet flavor. Ripens in September.

MAKAWAJIRO Medium-sized round fruit on an upright tree. Rich, orange-colored flesh, and very sweet. Ripens mid-October through mid-November.

MATSUMOTO Very much like Fuyu in flavor and quality but ripens earlier. Trees are strong growers, bearing fruit consistently. Ripens early October.

GWANG YANG A Korean persimmon. Bright orange, high quality fruit weighing about 6 oz. Ripens later than Tam Kam (late October).

JIRO A beautiful mid-size tree full of large, flat tomato-shaped, deep orange fruit. Matures in October. One of the most cold hardy.

TAM KAM Another Korean persimmon whose name translates as "Very Sweet". Bright orange, high quality fruit weighing about 6 oz. This is among the most winter hardy non-astringent persimmon. Ripens October.

AMERICAN / JAPANESE HYBRID PERSIMMON (eat when soft)

NIKITA'S GIFT HYBRID PERSIMMON What could be more lovely than a naturally dwarf tree loaded with delicious 2-3" bright reddish-orange persimmons? From the Ukraine, Nikita's Gift is a hybrid of Asian and American persimmons with exceptionally sweet flavor when ripe.

ROSSEYANKA HYBRID PERSIMMON An extremely cold hardy Russian hybrid. Cross of our native American persimmon *Diospyros virginiana* and the Asian Kaki persimmon. Its 2-3 inch fruit that is nearly seedless. Has an excellent smooth texture with a traditional syrupy sweet Asian persimmon flavor. Trees are rapid upright growers with a more American persimmon leaf type. Excellent large shade tree if left un-pruned. Tends to ripens mid October to late November.