**Diospyros kaki**  
**Japanese Persimmon**¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

**INTRODUCTION**

Japanese Persimmon is a species related to Common Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), but is native to Asia (China, Japan) (Fig. 1). It can grow to about 30 feet when mature. This is an excellent fruit tree for ornamental use and makes an excellent specimen. The tree is a sight to behold when leaves have fallen in autumn, displaying the bright yellow-orange fruits throughout the canopy. Similar to Common Persimmon, its preference is for a moist, well-drained soil in full sun locations. The tree has good drought tolerance. Japanese Persimmon develops an attractive red fall color, but the two to four-inch-diameter fruits can be a big mess when they fall from the tree.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Diospyros kaki  
**Pronunciation:** dye-OSS-pih-ross KACK-eye  
**Common name(s):** Japanese Persimmon  
**Family:** Ebenaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 9A (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; fruit tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height:** 20 to 30 feet  
- **Spread:** 15 to 25 feet  
- **Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
- **Crown shape:** round; upright  
- **Crown density:** dense  
- **Growth rate:** medium  
- **Texture:** coarse

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¹ This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-229, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire; serrate
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); obovate
Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: orange; red; yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: orange

Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown; gray
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Figure 3. Foliage of Japanese Persimmon.

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Certainly not a street or parking lot tree, Japanese Persimmon is probably best located as an occasional specimen where it can be viewed from a distance, away from walks. This will ensure that the fruit will drop on the lawn, not on a walk. Better yet, plant the tree in a loose, low-growing groundcover so dropping fruit will be hidden from view in the foliage of the groundcover.

Some non-astringent cultivars have been selected and could be available locally.

**Pests and Diseases**

A trouble-free tree, but messy in fruit.