



Diospyros virginiana Common Persimmon¹

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INTRODUCTION

An excellent small to medium tree, Common Persimmon is an interesting, somewhat irregularly-shaped native tree, for possible naturalizing in yards or parks (Fig. 1). Bark is grey or black and distinctly blocky with orange in the valleys between the blocks. Fall color can be a spectacular red in USDA hardiness zones 4 through 8a. It is well adapted to cities, but presents a problem with fruit litter, attracting flies and scavengers, such as opossums and other mammals. Its mature height can be 60 feet, with branches spreading from 20 to 35 feet and a trunk two feet thick, but it is commonly much shorter in landscapes. The trunk typically ascends up through the crown in a curved but very dominant fashion, rarely producing double or multiple leaders. Lateral branches are typically much smaller in diameter than the trunk.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Diospyros virginiana*

Pronunciation: dye-OSS-pih-ross

ver-jin-nee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): Common Persimmon

Family: *Ebenaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4B through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; fruit tree; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; specimen; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

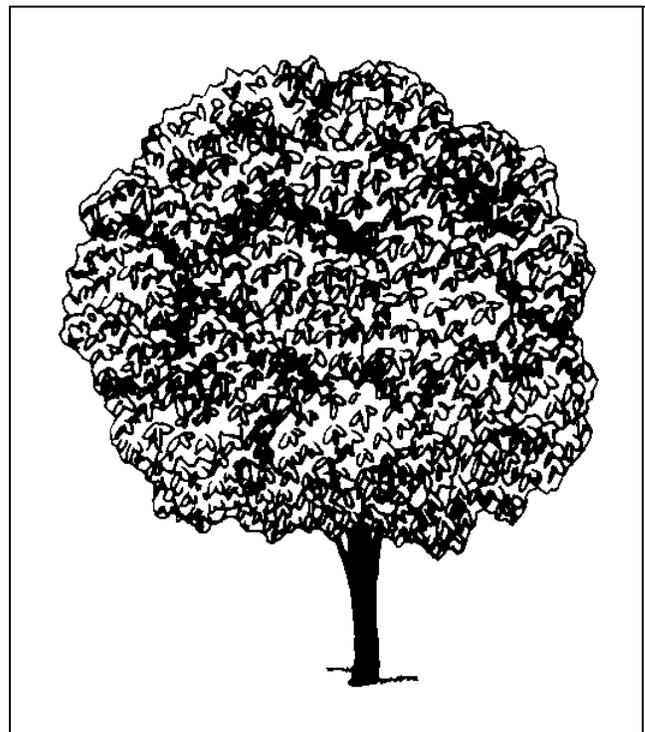


Figure 1. Middle-aged Common Persimmon.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 20 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; pyramidal

Crown density: moderate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red; yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 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; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; gray; reddish

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: 0.79

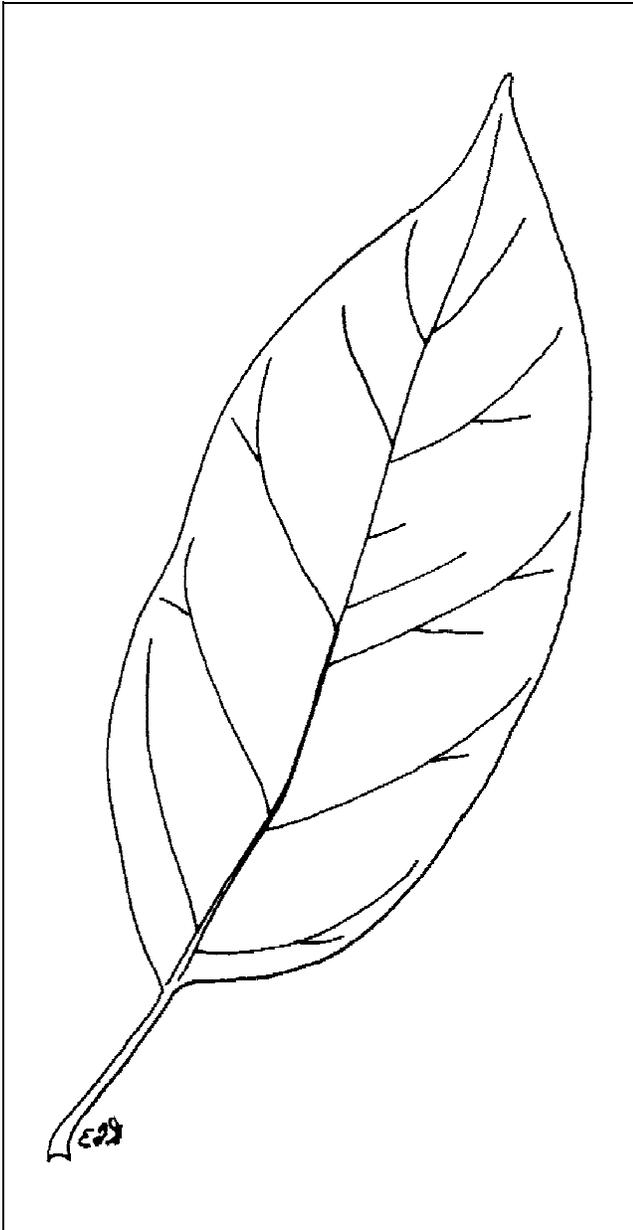


Figure 3. Foliage of Common Persimmon.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: seeds itself into the landscape
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Common Persimmon prefers moist, well-drained, bottomland or sandy soils but is also very drought- and urban-tolerant. Truly an amazing tree in its adaptability to about any site conditions, including alkaline soil. It is seen colonizing old fields as a volunteer tree but grows slowly on dry sites. Its fruit is an edible berry that usually ripens after frost, although some cultivars do not require the frost treatment to ripen. Before ripening, however, the fruit is decidedly astringent and not edible. Most American cultivars require both male and female trees for proper fruiting.

Except for cleaning up the messy fruit if it falls on a patio or sidewalk, Common Persimmon maintenance is quite easy and it could be planted more. Locate it where the slimy fruit will not fall on sidewalks and cause people to slip and fall. Because transplantation is difficult due to a coarsely-branched root system, Persimmon trees should be balled and burlapped when young or planted from containers. The wood is used for golf club heads and is very hard and almost black.

The variety *pubescens* has fuzzy leaves and twigs.

Pests

No serious pests, except occasionally caterpillars.

Diseases

Common Persimmon is troubled by a leaf-spot disease that may limit its use in the South. This disease causes black spots on the leaves and premature defoliation, sometimes in August in the north, September in the south. It will not kill the tree but the litter from early defoliation may be objectionable.

It is also susceptible to a vascular wilt which can be devastating to established trees.