



# *Diospyros texana* Texas Persimmon<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This slow-growing, native North American tree reaches a height of 20 to 40 feet with an equal width (usually smaller) and is deciduous from USDA hardiness zone 8 northward, remaining evergreen in its southern range (Fig. 1). The one to 2-inch-long, dark green, leathery leaves are slightly fuzzy underneath. The bark of Texas Persimmon is particularly striking, the smooth outside layers of gray, white, and pink peeling off in beautiful layers. Branches ascend into the crown in a twisted fashion unlike most other trees. The inconspicuous, green/white flowers are followed by the production of small, one-inch black fruits which, although edible to man, contain an unappealing number of seeds. However, these fruits are quite popular with birds and other wildlife who relish the sweet, juicy flesh. In Mexico, the fruits are used to make a black dye.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Diospyros texana*

**Pronunciation:** dye-OSS-pih-ross teck-SAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Texas Persimmon

**Family:** *Ebenaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; small parking lot

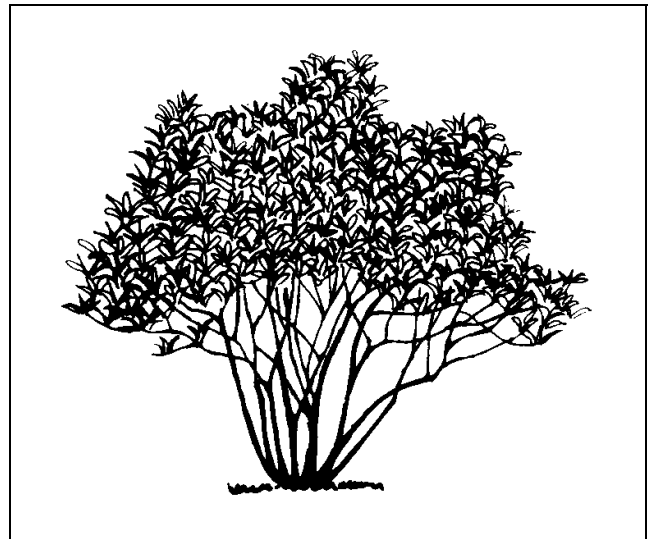


Figure 1. Middle-aged Texas Persimmon.

islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 40 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:** upright; vase shape

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-230, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblong; obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black; green

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; 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:** gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

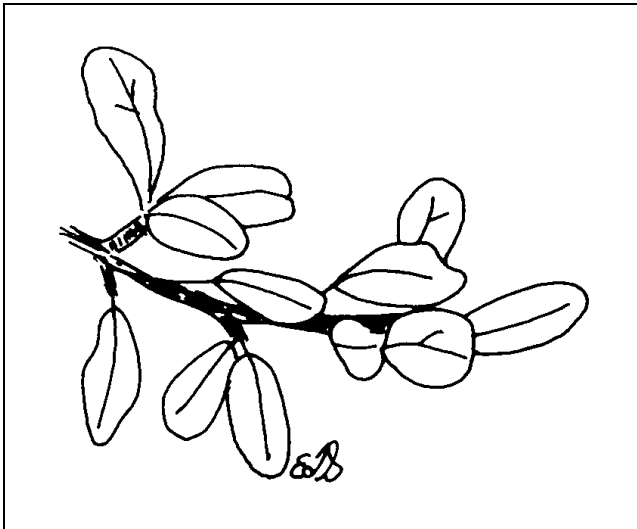


Figure 3. Foliage of Texas Persimmon.

Propagation is by seed. Seedling trees will begin flowering within five to six-years but it will take approximately 10-years for the flaking bark to appear.

### **Pests and Diseases**

It has few pests or diseases, none normally serious.

### **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:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

## **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Multiple trunks ascend into the vase-shaped crown forming a tree with a shape and structure similar to crape myrtle. Use it as an accent planted in a low ground cover to display the muscular looking bark. It is well suited for planting in a highway median or along a street with overhead power lines due to its small stature. Except for the small, black fruits which drop for a short period of time, this is a clean tree which could be planted more often in the urban landscape. It is very well adapted for residential landscapes, having tolerated extended periods of drought and neglect. Plant it in a prominent location to display the striking habit.

Texas Persimmon should be grown in full sun on well-drained soils and is often found on alkaline sites. It is especially tolerant of drought and neglect and should need only occasional fertilization every year or two.