Diospyros kaki: Japanese Persimmon

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction

Japanese persimmon is a species related to common persimmon (Diospyros virginiana), but is native to Asia (China, Japan). 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 2- to 4-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: 7A through 9A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: container or planter; fruit; specimen
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

Figure 1. Young Diospyros kaki: Japanese persimmon
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

Figure 2. Range


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U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
Crown shape: upright/erect, round  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: coarse  

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

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Flower**  
Flower color: white/cream/gray  
Flower characteristics: not showy  

**Fruit**  
Fruit shape: oval, round  
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches  
Fruit covering: fleshy  
Fruit color: orange  
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem  

**Trunk and Branches**  
Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
Pruning requirement: little required  
Breakage: resistant  
Current year twig color: brown, gray  
Current year twig thickness: medium  
Wood specific gravity: unknown  

**Culture**  
Light requirement: full sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; alkaline; well-drained  

**Drought tolerance**: moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance**: low  

**Other**  
Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: no  
Outstanding tree: no  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible  
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases  

**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.