

Urban Harvest  
Gardening for good.

## Persimmons

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Fruit Family:	
Hardiness:	Easily withstands average winter temperatures
Light:	Full sun
Size:	15'H & 20'W; varies by variety; may be pruned to desired height & width
Soil:	Well-drained soil required
Planting:	Plant during dormancy in Jan - Feb



The Asian persimmon is one of the best fruits we can grow in our area; they do well throughout the region. The taste of the fruit is always outstanding. They are abundant in September when few other fruits are ripe. The leaves and the fruit turn red-orange in the fall, lending a wonderful ornamental value to the garden.

People who have eaten the American persimmon or the Texas persimmon may think of them as seedy, tiny, and poorly flavored. If they ate them at peak ripeness, they were probably sweet and delicious, but not much in size.

Asian persimmons have been bred and selected for thousands of years, and are vastly better for our tastes. They are large, mostly seedless, and delicious

when fully ripe. Persimmons can be eaten fresh or used in a variety of dishes and baked goods.

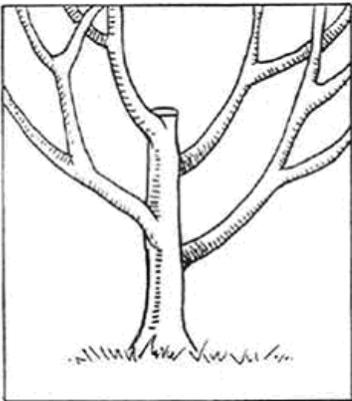
### Care of Persimmon Trees

**Planting:** Plant persimmons in a mostly sunny area, 8' to 10' from the nearest tree. They can be planted closer, but there will be very little room between trees - the limb spread on persimmons is about 5' - 6' from the trunk. Select a planting area that is well-drained or create a raised planting bed. Remove all vegetation within a minimum three-foot diameter circle.

Locate the root flare; the point where the trunk transitions to the roots. Remove any nursery soil above this point, making sure the roots are still covered. Trim any roots that appear to be circling the root ball and any broken or clearly dead roots. Measure the depth of the resulting root ball.

Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to easily accommodate the root ball. The sides of the hole should be tapered outward, not straight down (visualize a wok, not a stock pot) with the widest point at the top of the hole. The deepest point of the hole should be no deeper than your measurement of the root ball. This will allow the root flare to sit at the soil level and insures that the graft scar (located several inches about the root flare) will always be several inches above the soil level.

Place the root ball in the prepared hole. Check for straightness. Backfill  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the depth with existing soil – no amendments should be added during planting. Water well and allow it to drain. Fill the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the depth. Tamp the soil, but do not pack hard. Water in well and water every day for a few days unless it rains. A mulch of composted native mulch or rotted leaves is highly recommended. Do not use bark mulch.



**Pruning:** Persimmon trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. It is recommended to develop a modified central-leader scaffold. Scaffold branches should be well spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically. Limbs should be upward-sloping at an angle of  $45^\circ$  to  $60^\circ$  from horizontal. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give sunlight access to lower limbs. Remove crossing branches and remove or thin interior branches that grow vertically from the scaffold. Avoid damaging the roots and branches; the tree is susceptible to infections from wounds.

Persimmons tend to fruit on last year's wood by sending out spurs in the spring from relatively fat buds. Prune in order to stimulate this fruiting wood. Each summer, remove water sprouts (vigorous upright shoots), vigorous laterals that did not produce fruit, and vigorous growth beyond the fruiting branches. Your goal is to remove weak, unproductive, and old wood and to stimulate new fruiting wood. In the dormant season, head back all fruited shoots to a two-bud spur. Over time, branches may become old and unproductive. Beginning in year six, cut one scaffold back to about two feet each year to rejuvenate the branch.

**Production:** Some trees may produce fruit in the second year but it is a good idea to pick the fruit off when it is small and let the tree put all its energy into growth rather than fruit production. You will begin to see significant production when the tree reaches 5'-6', and can see hundreds of fruits from a mature tree. Persimmons should be thinned about a month after blooming to about 6" apart along the limb.

**Watering:** All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can be a little more than 3 minutes with a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " hose and 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  minutes with a  $\frac{5}{8}$ " hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose.

**Fertilizing:** We recommend an organic program for fruit trees in the home landscape. For a small number of trees, use a slow release organic fertilizer, available at local independent nurseries. If you have a large number of trees, or a small number of trees and a limited budget, you can use cottonseed meal, available at nurseries and feed stores. Use the application rates for one or the other as shown

below. Fertilizers should be broadcast under the entire canopy space of the tree. An organic mulch of compost and native mulch, or well-rotted leaves should be maintained at all times as part of your nutrition program. Do not over-fertilize persimmons – excess nitrogen can cause fruit drop.

Slow release organic fertilizer: 1<sup>st</sup> year – ½ cup; 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years – 3 pounds; subsequent years - 20 to 40 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply every 3 – 4 months.

Cottonseed meal: 1<sup>st</sup> year – 1.5 cups; 2<sup>nd</sup> year – 3 cups; 3<sup>rd</sup> year – 6 cups; mature trees – 3 to 6 quarts per inch of trunk measured at the base. Apply in February and May.

**Harvesting:** There are two main types of Asian persimmon: astringent and non-astringent. Non-astringent varieties can be eaten even when firm and green-skinned and just get better flavored as they turn deep orange. Many people prefer these types, but so do the birds. You will not likely get any unless you net them with strong mosquito netting or make individual double bags from window-screening.

When the astringent types are fully ripe, they are sweeter and better flavored than non-astringent types, but they are aspirin-flavored before they are ripe. This causes birds to avoid them for the most part, so they can be easier to grow. They are ripe when the area near the stem of the fruit is soft and can be soft and squishy when ripe; a little like holding a small water balloon or an over-ripe tomato.

In either case, you can leave the fruit on the tree until it turns bright orange and is ready to eat; but most people harvest when they are partially orange to avoid predation from birds. When harvesting early, the fruit can be placed on the countertop for ripening. Astringent varieties can be harvested when they are fairly orange, and placed in a pot of tap water. Change the water night and day for three days to remove the astringency.

**Pests:** Birds and wildlife such as opossums and raccoons can be pests of ripening persimmons. Netting the tree is your best defense. Regular harvesting will also help keep pest damage down.

### Varieties of Persimmons for the 2018 Sale

*Chocolate, Fuyu, Saijo, Tanenashi, Weeping*

### Varieties of Persimmons for Southeast Texas

**Chocolate:** Small to medium, oblong fruits with bright red-orange skin. Sweet, spicy flesh with a chocolatey-brown tint. Superb flavor sought by persimmon connoisseurs. Astringent until ripe. Ripens October - November. Self-fruitful. **200 chill hours.**

**Fuyu:** Best known of the non-astringent persimmons. Medium sized, sweet tasting, flat-bottomed, squatty fruit; orange with light orange flesh. Fruit lasts for weeks without refrigeration. Firm and non-astringent. They are sweet and flavorful and crunchy when ripe. Thin to develop good sized fruit. This is a very easy to grow tree that does well in our climate; very hardy, attractive tree. Practically pest free, but without netting, you may lose a lot to wildlife.

**Giombo:** “Jumbo” has one of the largest persimmon fruit (to one pound) you can grow and is a gourmet variety. Ripens two weeks after Saijo and is astringent until fully ripe. Fruit are light translucent orange and thin peeled with a sweet, juicy, jelly type flesh. The tree is early to start growth in the spring and is sometimes injured by freezing temperatures. Giombo is a biennial bearer when young.

**Hachiya:** An upright, spreading, vigorous, tree that produces rich, sweet delicious fruits in November. A very large, oblong or cone-shaped fruit with bright orange-red skin when ripe. Considered the largest and best cooking quality persimmon. This variety is astringent until fully ripe, at which point the pulp is nearly a gel. This is a sweet, culinary persimmon used for drying, purees, baked goods, puddings, jams, sherbets. Place upside down on a window sill after harvesting. They will ripen in about a week.

**Matsomotowasefuyu:** Flat orange fruit, fairly large. Very good quality. Good production on a vigorous, spreading tree. Non-astringent.

**Saijo:** Vigorous, upright and spreading tree that bears consistently each year. Small, elongated, conical fruit. Skin is dull-yellow when mature. Flavor is sweet; ranked among the best by gourmets. Mature fruits are attractive when dried. Cold hardy to -10° F.

**Suruga:** Fruit is delicious while crisp. Ripens early-November through December. Spreading tree of moderate height. Non-astringent.

**Tanenashi:** Medium to large, cone-shaped, nearly seedless fruits. The brilliant orange-skinned fruits ripen in October. Astringent when first picked - soft, sweet pulp when ripe. Very productive variety that bears at an early age. **100 - 200 chill hours**

**Weeping Persimmon:** Believed to be a sport from Tanenashi, which is in itself a highly ornamental variety. Weeping Persimmon should demonstrate the same characteristics as its parent. Medium to large, cone-shaped, nearly seedless fruits. The brilliant orange-skinned fruits ripen in October. Astringent when first picked - soft, sweet pulp when ripe. Very productive variety that bears at an early age. **100 - 200 chill hours**