

PERSIMMON



Persimmons are beautiful trees through all the seasons, featuring dark green leaves in spring, subtle flowers in spring, and beautiful fall foliage.

ENJOYING THE FRUIT

Persimmons can be eaten fresh and keep for two months in the refrigerator. They also can be dried and eaten like figs. They can be frozen, or pulped for use in puddings or pies.

Pick American and hybrid persimmons when they are very soft and their skins are almost translucent, or collect the fruit after it falls to the ground. Most American persimmons drop their fruit when it's ripe, so mulch under the trees to cushion the fall. If you pick an American persimmon when it is unripe, it will be extremely astringent and may put you off. Harvest Asian varieties (non-astringent cultivars) when they are fully colored but still slightly firm.



CHOOSING A SITE

Persimmons perform best in moist, rich, well-drained soil but are remarkably tolerant of dry, infertile sites.

They prefer full sun but can tolerate some light shade. About 4–6 hours of direct sun is best.

PLANTING

Please refer to our [tree planting instructions](#).

TAKING CARE: WATERING, FEEDING, PRUNING

For the first 2 years during the growing season, water the new tree once a week if it hasn't rained. After that, it should need watering only during periods of drought. Keep the soil evenly moist soil for optimal fruit production.

Feed persimmons in late winter, before trees break dormancy. Spread several inches of aged compost around the tree to the dripline each spring, keeping it away from the trunk. Top this with wood chips. Also spray the foliage with compost tea or a dilute solution of fish emulsion a few times during the growing season. But be careful because excess nitrogen will cause the fruit to drop early. Adding a little lime may be needed to keep the soil pH optimal, between 6 and 7.

Train persimmons to a central leader or modified central leader, leaving six to eight branches placed evenly around the trunk. The best time to prune a persimmon is in late winter, when the sap is dormant. But realize that the flower buds have already formed in the fall (the fruit is borne on current and one-year-old wood), so any pruning takes off potential fruit. If the tree has a lot of fruit, thin some to avoid the risk of breaking branches.

AVOIDING PESTS AND DISEASE

Generally, persimmons have minimal pests or diseases.

HARVESTING

Persimmons begin bearing fruit 2–3 years after planting; some grafted trees will bear fruit the year after planting. Harvest ripe persimmons by clipping the fruit from the tree with a pruner, leaving some stem attached to the fruit.

CONSIDERING SPECIFIC VARIETIES

Persimmons are available as Asian, American, and hybrid varieties.

American persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) are hardier than Asian persimmons and can be grown in both cold and mild winter regions (zones 5 to 9). These persimmons are considered astringent: if not fully ripe, they taste dry or chalky, causing the mouth to pucker. However, they lose their astringent taste after the tree has been hit by frost. Ripe fruit can be rich and sweet, and is soft. American persimmons can be male, female, or bisexual; some are self-fruiting, and others are not. They will bear 2 to 3 bushels of fruit each year.

Asian persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*)—also called Oriental, Japanese, or kaki persimmons—can be grown in regions with mild winters (zones 7 to 10). They have a honey-sweet taste and smooth, soft texture; most varieties are non-astringent, though not all. Some people eat them like apples. Asian persimmon trees will bear 1 to 2 bushels of fruit each year.

Hybrid persimmons—crosses between Asian and American varieties—are hardy like American persimmons and have larger fruit (2 to 2½ inches in diameter). They are sweet and flavorful when allowed to fully ripen.

Most female cultivars of Asian persimmons and a few female cultivars of American bear fruit without pollination. Here are some varieties to consider:

MEADER (American)

This early variety ripens from October through November. Originally from Rochester, NH, it is very cold-hardy. Meader is considered self-fertile and is mostly seedless. The fruits are pumpkin-orange and 1.5–2 inches in diameter. The trees will grow about 10–12 feet tall.

YATES (American)

This native persimmon has fruits about 2.5 inches in diameter. They ripen in late October and are very productive. It's said to be self-fertile, but we have found that they are more productive when other persimmons are nearby. Yates will grow to 20 feet tall.

NIKITA'S GIFT (hybrid)

This Ukrainian cross of an American persimmon and an Asian persimmon was created at Nikita Botanic Garden in Yalta, Ukraine. It is a small tree at 12 feet tall and a hardy variety. The fruit tastes more like Asian persimmon with no astringency. Said to be self-fertile. It has wonderful yellow fall foliage, while the fruit is red-orange.

CHOCOLATE (Asian)

Chocolate has brown flesh when ripe, hence the name chocolate. It is very sweet and has an acorn shape. It is non-astringent and said to be self-fertile. It has wonderful yellow fall foliage, while the fruit is red orange. Chocolate persimmons will have more male flowers, which are good for pollination, but will still yield abundant fruits.



sprout@resroots.org



www.resroots.org



Photos by [gang2015](#), [Jongioon Moon](#), [yibg](#) @ Pixabay