

JUST FRUITS

AND EXOTICS

PERSIMMON

INTRODUCTION

Persimmons are still something of a rarity in the U.S., but those in the know agree that there is no more beautiful sight than a group of golden persimmons ripening to sweet perfection on a sunny windowsill. The smooth, custard-textured flesh closely resembles maple-flavored jelly. Enjoy persimmons fresh or use them in any number of desserts and breads. Dried, they taste like chewy papaya. The trees, very hardy and well adapted to our area, are known to live upwards of 75 years. They require little attention once established. Over 500 varieties have been developed throughout Asia, with fruit ranging from plum-size to football-size, with many flavors and textures. We've narrowed the range to what we think are the very best varieties. There are two basic types of persimmon fruit: astringent (puckery) and non-astringent (nonpuckery). Astringent varieties turn orange and look ripe long before they are ready to eat and should be eaten only when completely jelly-soft to the touch. Non-astringent persimmons may be eaten while still firm and crisp. As a group, the astringent varieties are sweeter, richer and juicier, while the nonastringent types are crisp, mellow and more sugarcane- or cantaloupe-flavored. Our trees are grafted on American Persimmon *Diospyros virginiana*.

USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Persimmons are one of the loveliest trees to be found. They have smooth gray-to-tan bark, and broad, leathery, jade-green leaves (2-3 inches wide and 4-6 inches long). The large varieties average 25 to 30 feet at maturity, a good size for lining driveways and paths, or as a specimen or accent tree. The small trees are usually very heavy bearers and are great in small groups in the shrubbery border, with low annuals or groundcover beneath them. All persimmons have spectacular fall colors - bright yellows to clear oranges, light pinks to fire-engine reds - and the whole show happens just as the fruit colors up!

PLANTING + CULTURE

SITE SELECTION

Well-drained, sandy loam soils are preferred, but persimmons will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Persimmon will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Avoid frost pockets – trees may be damaged by unseasonable frosts.

SOIL PREPARATION + PLANTING

Dig a planting hole approximately three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Set that soil aside and mix it 50/50 with either aged mushroom compost, aged manure, or rotted pine bark & aged manure/compost. Remove the persimmon from the pot, gently loosen the root ball, cut any roots that swirl around the edges of the root ball, and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole.** Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. We suggest weed-free hay or pine bark as mulch. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation.

Spacing for persimmons depends upon the desired use in the landscape. Trees should be a minimum of 10 foot apart for small growers and 20 feet apart for large growers.

FERTILIZATION

The type of fertilizer you choose may be chemical or organic. Make sure that the fertilizer contains iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to age of plant. See chart below:

Starter Fertilizer & Soil (Apply at Planting)	Fertilizer to Maintain (Apply Early March, Late May, & Late July)
Espoma Bio-tone® Starter Plus Mix Mushroom Compost in Soil	Espoma Tree-tone®

Notes:

- Follow Instructions on Bag for how much to apply each time.
- Months to Fertilize vary based on your zone. Fertilize 3 times per year. We recommend the 1st fertilization starting after the last Freeze of the winter (Late February/Early March in zone 8) & the last Fertilization being no later than August or even June/July in some of the colder zones 7 & below.)
- Fertilizing too late in the year in colder climates will promote new growth, which will be subject to freeze damage.

See our “Planting a Tree Correctly” Guide & Espoma Bio-tone® and Tree-tone® Fact Sheets on our website for more info.

WATER

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new persimmon. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply – this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Persimmons should receive at least 1 inch of water each week for best growth and fruit production. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the persimmon clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients.

PRUNING

Persimmons in the South are usually pruned to an open center habit. At planting select 3-4 scaffold branches spaced equally around the trunk and remove other branches flush with the trunk. In the second dormant season, top the scaffold limbs approximately 36 inches from the trunk to encourage secondary branching. Remove any strong branches growing into the center. You want the tree to have good air circulation in the interior. Continue to train persimmon trees during the first 5 years. Pruning should be designed to train the tree outward by removing strong branches growing into the center and removing water sprouts. The tree can be topped out at 7 or 8 foot with mold and hold cuts, which are devigorating heading cuts made into two year old wood. Do this by topping back the main scaffold limb to a weaker outward growing shoot. This will keep the tree at an easy picking height as well as stimulate new growth lower on the tree. Mature trees are pruned during the dormant season. Thin out weak branches and head back long shoots as needed to maintain tree shape. Remove water sprouts. Remove any dead, damaged or diseased branches when pruning. Use mold and hold cuts to maintain trees to an easy picking height.

VARIETIES

A detailed Variety List can be found on our website: justfruitsandexotics.com