

# Common Persimmon

*Diospyros virginiana*



Scott Stubblebine

## Basic Information

The common persimmon, *Diospyros virginiana*, of the Ebenaceae (Ebony) family, is also known as the American persimmon, Eastern persimmon, or simply simmon. It has also been given other names, such as possumwood, white ebony, barabara, boa-wood, butterwood, and sugar-plum. The tree normally can be anywhere from 30 to 80 feet tall, but has been recorded as big as 150 feet tall. It's parts each have a wide variety of uses even aside from its edible fruits. [1][2][3]

## Life History

The seeds are spread by birds and other wildlife that eat the fruits of the tree. Once these seeds sprout and the saplings start to grow, they will usually reach heights between half a foot and a foot high after the first year. [2][3]

The trees don't yield fruit until they reach maturity at around 10 years old. However the best years for these trees to bear fruit is 25-50 years old. They have been recorded to get as old as 150 years. [2][3]

## Geographical Range

The Common Persimmon can be found several different states all over the eastern central and southeastern United States. However, it doesn't grow in the Appalachian Mountains. It is most abundant around the Mississippi River basin. It can

grow in variety of soil types and terrains, but grows best in well-draining soil. Fossils of the trees have also been outside of the United States such as in Greenland. [1][2][3]

## Characteristics of Leaves and Flowers

The simple leaves of a common persimmon are alternately arranged and are normally fairly large (4-6 inches long). They are ovate and entire, lacking any teeth or lobes. They have a bit of a pronounced tip at the end of the leaf. [1][2][3]



The flowers of the common persimmon have four regular parts and can be either male or female, depending on the tree. They are important trees for honey bees to gather pollen for making honey. The flowers can grow singly, or in groups of up to four. [1][2][3]

## Fruit

The fruits of the common persimmon, often referred to as persimmons, are small (ranging anywhere from 2-5cm), round and fleshy berries. They are only about They start out looking green and yellow in color. Once ripe, they are usually



orange, sometimes reddish with a fuzzy texture. As it gets colder they turn yellow and gain a waxy texture. The seeds are flat and can contain anywhere from zero to eight seeds in them. The fruit is edible and has high quantities of vitamin C. It can be eaten raw or you can prepare it by cooking or drying the fruit. The fruit is also eaten by various wildlife animals. [1][2][3]



## Pests

The common persimmon has several pests that often inhabit it. However, none of these pests normally cause extensive damage to the trees. The list of pests includes both bark and phloem boring insects such as the persimmon borer, the false powderpost beetle, and the twig girdler. It also has problems with caterpillars including the web worm and the hickory horned devil. These pests occur mainly in the southern region. [1][3]

Fungi such as the *Cephalosporium diospyri* can also cause damage to the trees. This fungus sometimes has also been used to kill the trees where they are not wanted. [1][3]

## Uses

The common persimmon has a history of many uses. It has been used, for everything from food to carpentry materials

and medicine to sporting goods equipment. It has also been used as a decorative tree. [1][2][3][5]

The fruits of a common persimmon, when ripe, can be prepared in several ways. They can be used to make pudding, bread, pies, and even alcohol such as beer and brandy. The seeds can even be used as an alternative to coffee when they are dried and ground up. The unripe fruit can be used to make things like permanent ink. [1][2][4]

The fruit and bark also have a history of medicinal uses. They have been used as an antiseptic and as a fever reducer. They have also been used to cure illnesses and diseases such as gonorrhea, hemorrhoids, syphilis, and dysentery. The fruit also has multiple other medicinal uses. [1][2][3]

The wood from a common persimmon tree is a fairly hard wood. It is even used to make wooden golf club heads and wedges to split other woods. It is also used to make carpentry materials such as planes, screws, and mallets. It has also been used to make shuttles for a loom, furniture veneer, and even gunstocks. The bark from the tree can also be used to create a dye. [2][3][4]



## Questions

- 1) Where is the common persimmon usually found?
- A) Canada
  - B) The Sahara Desert
  - C) Southeastern United States
  - D) Northern parts of Guatemala

## References

- [1][http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_divi5.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_divi5.pdf)
- [2][http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diospyros\\_virginiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diospyros_virginiana)
- [3][http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics\\_manual/volume\\_2/diospyros/virginiana.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/diospyros/virginiana.htm)
- [4][http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=DIVI5](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=DIVI5)
- [5]<http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~chbriand/PDFs/Huntia05.pdf>