



Diospyros texana Texas Persimmon¹

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INTRODUCTION

This slow-growing, native North American tree reaches a height of 20 to 40 feet with an equal width (usually smaller) and is deciduous from USDA hardiness zone 8 northward, remaining evergreen in its southern range (Fig. 1). The one to 2-inch-long, dark green, leathery leaves are slightly fuzzy underneath. The bark of Texas Persimmon is particularly striking, the smooth outside layers of gray, white, and pink peeling off in beautiful layers. Branches ascend into the crown in a twisted fashion unlike most other trees. The inconspicuous, green/white flowers are followed by the production of small, one-inch black fruits which, although edible to man, contain an unappealing number of seeds. However, these fruits are quite popular with birds and other wildlife who relish the sweet, juicy flesh. In Mexico, the fruits are used to make a black dye.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Diospyros texana*

Pronunciation: dye-OSS-pih-ross teck-SAY-nuh

Common name(s): Texas Persimmon

Family: *Ebenaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; small parking lot

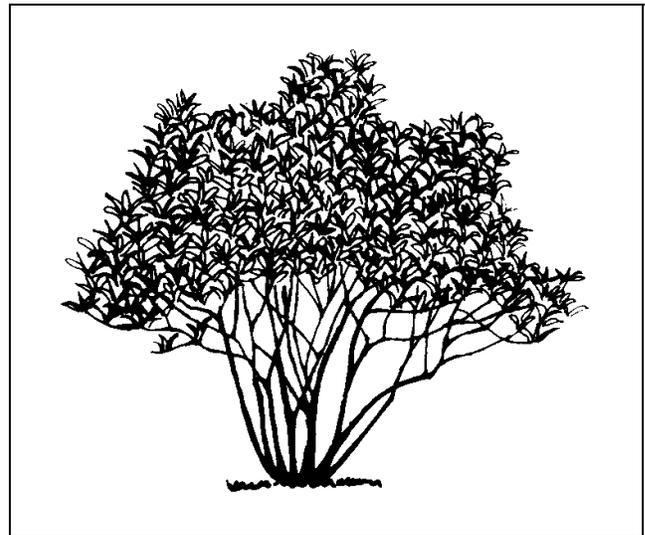


Figure 1. Middle-aged Texas Persimmon.

islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 40 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: upright; vase shape

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong; obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; green

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

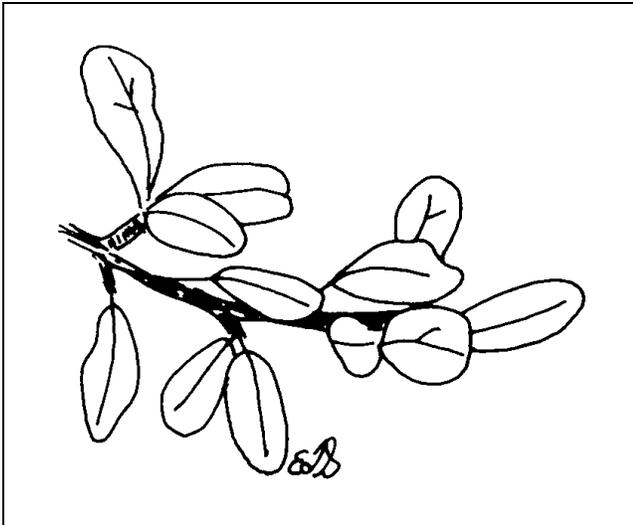


Figure 3. Foliage of Texas Persimmon.

Propagation is by seed. Seedling trees will begin flowering within five to six-years but it will take approximately 10-years for the flaking bark to appear.

Pests and Diseases

It has few pests or diseases, none normally serious.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Multiple trunks ascend into the vase-shaped crown forming a tree with a shape and structure similar to crape myrtle. Use it as an accent planted in a low ground cover to display the muscular looking bark. It is well suited for planting in a highway median or along a street with overhead power lines due to its small stature. Except for the small, black fruits which drop for a short period of time, this is a clean tree which could be planted more often in the urban landscape. It is very well adapted for residential landscapes, having tolerated extended periods of drought and neglect. Plant it in a prominent location to display the striking habit.

Texas Persimmon should be grown in full sun on well-drained soils and is often found on alkaline sites. It is especially tolerant of drought and neglect and should need only occasional fertilization every year or two.