

Friday's Feature

By

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Add fruit to the landscape with Oriental persimmon

Late fall through winter is a great time to add fruit trees to your landscape. One that should be considered is the persimmon. In the landscape, persimmons are attractive trees offering both beautifully colored fruit and showy fall leaf color.

Two species of persimmons are grown in the United States, the American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) and the Oriental persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*).

The American persimmon is a native species and produces a small bitter tasting fruit that is not often marketed commercially. It is an excellent small to medium tree with an interesting, somewhat irregular shape. The bark is grey or black and distinctly blocky with orange in the valleys between the blocks. Fall color can be a spectacular red.

The native persimmon fruits are valuable to wildlife including whitetail deer, raccoons, foxes, skunks, many birds, and small rodents. In the home landscape, it can present a problem with fruit litter, attracting flies, scavengers and other mammals.

Oriental persimmons originated in China and were first cultivated in Florida in the late 1800's. The Oriental persimmon is a great choice for the homeowner looking to add fruit trees to the landscape.

Persimmons are classified as astringent or nonastringent. Astringent cultivars must be completely ripe and soft before they're suitable for eating. A nonastringent persimmon can be eaten when it is crisp as an apple.

The non-astringent varieties for our area include Fuyu, also called 'Fuyugaki', 'Hanafuyu', 'IZU', 'O'Gosho', and Matsumoto Wase Fuyu.

Persimmons are easy care trees requiring little water and fertilizer. In fact, excessive fertilizers cause vigorous growth and fruit drop. They need well-drained soil in full sun and will not do well in wet areas. Allow them room to spread 15 to 20 feet for best growth.

Containerized trees can be planted any time of the year. Many times, catalogs carry bare root trees that

should be planted in December or January. This allows time for the roots to become established before the trees leaf out in the spring.

The native persimmon is usually dioecious; that is, trees produce either male or female flowers. A male tree is usually needed for pollination for fruit to be produced. Female trees seldom produce fruit without pollination.

Many Oriental persimmons are self fruitful and set fruit without the need for a pollinizer variety. Although fruit can be produced without pollination, heavier and more consistent crops usually result from pollination. Most commonly grown Oriental persimmons varieties produce seedless fruit without being pollinated. Pollinated fruit will have seeds. Common persimmons will not pollinate Oriental persimmons.

Persimmons are a good source of vitamin A, contain a very small trace of fat and no cholesterol. Approximately 100 grams of raw fruit contains 70 calories, 3.6g dietary fiber, 161mg potassium, 7.5mg vitamin C, 2167 IU vitamin A, and 7.5 mcg folate.

For much more information on Oriental persimmons, contact your local Extension Office or go online to <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG242>.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important component of a healthy diet. Consider adding edible plants to your landscape. Why not try persimmons as your next incredible edible landscape plant?

Theresa Friday is the Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

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