

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. The 1- 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.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Diospyros texana*: Texas Persimmon
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS Extension

General Information

Scientific name: *Diospyros texana*

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

Common name(s): Texas persimmon

Family: *Ebenaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: container or planter; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; specimen; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; bonsai

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



Figure 2. Range

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Description

Height: 20 to 40 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: upright/erect, vase

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

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 color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

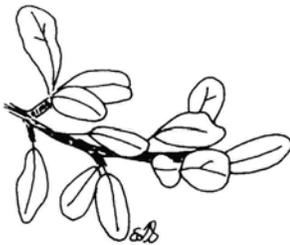


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black, green

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

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 that 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.

Propagation is by seed. Seedling trees will begin flowering within 5- 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.