UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH389

Diospyros texana: Texas Persimmon[1]

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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

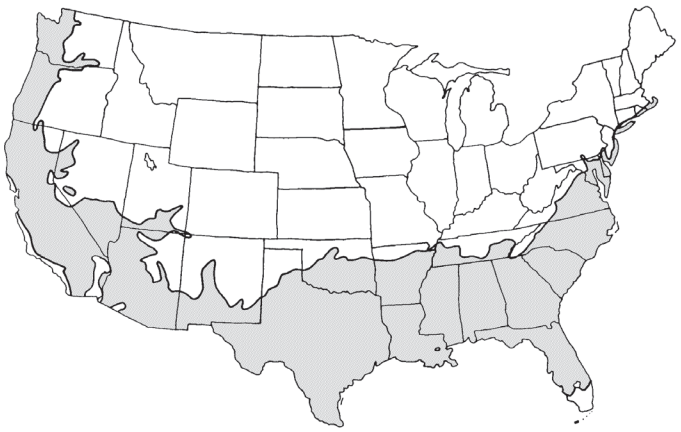


Figure 2. Range

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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

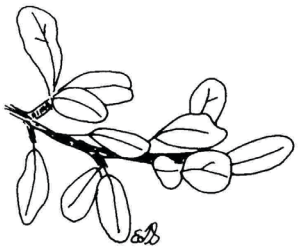


Figure 3. Foliage

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.