

Diospyros - Growing Guide

Growing Diospyros

Commonly known as 'Persimmon' and 'Date Plum'

Only three species from this large genus of trees are hardy enough to be grown in the UK. Diospyros are mainly of Chinese origin; *D. kaki* and *D. lotus* were introduced by Ernest Wilson. *D. virginiana* however is from the eastern USA.

Diospyros are grown for their attractive habit and their fleshy fruit which, in most species, is edible.

D. kaki, the 'Kaki' or 'Chinese Persimmon', grows to around 20-30ft with downy young shoots and oval tapering leaves 3-8in long which taper at both ends. The fruits are bright yellow and 3in across after small bell shaped flowers. These are now a common sight in our supermarkets and the fruit is widely grown in Mediterranean countries. Opinions differ as to whether these trees are unisexual or dioecious. In theory you may need separate male and female trees, but the reality is that some trees fruit plentifully without male counterparts. The autumn colour is spectacular and includes a range of orange, yellow and red.



Diospyros kaki



Diospyros kaki



Diospyros kaki



Diospyros lotus



Diospyros lotus



Diospyros lotus



Diospyros lotus



Diospyros lotus

D. virginicus 'American Persimmon' or the 'Possum Apple' grows taller than the other two species which we grow. It has attractive rugged bark cut into square or rectangular blocks and was first planted at Kew in 1762. Male and female flowers are on separate trees. The female flowers are yellowish white and the fruits are orange shaped but pale yellow with a red cheek. They are about 1-1½in across. Wonderful autumn colour which is another reason for growing these little known trees.

Since we are all beginning to eat persimmon fruits why not try growing them as well!

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