

Persimmon

Oriental persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*) has been grown in Florida for many years. At one time there were commercial plantings in Florida numbering about 22,750 trees. Because of marketing difficulties, however, the industry ceased, but the oriental persimmon is still a very popular dooryard fruit in Florida. It is widely adapted to many soil types and climatic conditions, although it grows best in the northern sections of Florida.

Persimmons go by two general classes: the astringent types and the non-astringent types. The astringent types should be completely soft before they are eaten; In general, crops can remain on the tree a month after marketable color develops, becoming softer with greater colors and sugar. The non-astringent types are quite firm and can be eaten prior to softening.

Depending on the variety, persimmon fruit is harvested from August to November.

Fertilizing

Fruit drop is a common problem for persimmons and is largely caused by over-fertilization of nitrogen. For the first two years after transplanting, fertilize using 1/2 to 1 pound (1-2 cups) of 10-10-10 with micronutrients per year of age in March, June, and September. For the third year, consider applying fertilizer only in March and June. While maturing trees should generally be able to receive additional fertilizer per year of age (not to exceed 10-15 pounds of 10-10-10 per year), some trees may begin to have issues with fruit drop. If fruit drop continues to be problematic, consider switching to a 5-10-15 fertilizer and/or applying less fertilizer at each application. In other words, fertilization should be based on plant performance.

Pruning

Most persimmon trees are trained to the modified central leader system.

The main upward shoot is cut back or modified to force lateral growth of side shoots. Three to 6 branches are encouraged, starting 3 feet from the ground and up to 4 feet above that point. The branches should radiate around the canopy circumference and initiate from points not adjacent to one another. The final shape of the canopy is a broad-based, rounded-top pyramid.

Second year winter pruning consists of selecting lateral branches fitting the pattern and removing those which formed in the wrong places. Upright shoots that have narrow crotch angles are pruned out because they will not be strong enough to hold fruit loads. The central leader is trimmed back about 1/3 and the terminals of selected shoots are cut slightly to encourage further branching.

Third year winter pruning follows the same pattern as second year pruning along with removing inside or vertical limbs which cross or rub each other. Twig terminals and some side shoots on main lateral branches should be left unpruned. This pattern is followed each successive year. The height of the tree is limited by cutting off strong growing sprouts and the vertical growth of the central leader or any lateral branch. As the tree gets older, the fruiting portions tend to spread farther from the center. It is necessary to cut back some limbs providing more branching and fruiting terminals the following year. Attention must also be paid to thinning the canopy for light penetration. Pruning must maintain a balance between fruiting and vegetative vigor. Generally, not a lot of wood needs to be pruned from persimmon trees.

In some years, trees will produce heavy crops resulting in a light crop the following year. To reduce the problem, thin the fruit to 6 inches apart within a month after bloom in a year when the crop is heavy.

UF/IFAS Publications

[Oriental Persimmon in Florida](#)

[Diospyros virginiana: Common Persimmon](#)

[Diospyros kaki: Japanese Persimmon](#)

[Diospyros texana: Texas Persimmon](#)

[Persimmon Pest Management](#)