

# *Diospyros kaki*

## Japanese persimmon, Oriental persimmon, Sharon fruit



*Diospyros kaki* (Japanese persimmon, Oriental persimmon, Sharon fruit) was native to the Yangtze Valley in China from where it was distributed and became naturalised in a large swathe of China and Japan. In 1780, a Japanese specimen was described by Swedish naturalist Carl Thunberg and consequently he gave the species its second name in Japanese *kaki*. The *kaki* grows in Asia in mixed, deciduous woodland at the edge of the subtropical evergreen forests. *Diospyros kaki* develops into a large shrub or small tree with a dense round crown, in its native habitat up to a height of 25 metres and in cultivation up to a maximum of ten metres. This tree has been in cultivation for a long time because of its edible fruits; there are as many as 2,800 selections in existence.

The familiar and popular, fragrant and edible, orange-yellow, tomato-like fruits of *Diospyros kaki* are produced during high summer temperatures. Being dioecious, a female and male tree are needed for fruit formation in September to November. A unique feature is that the pollinator affects the flavour of the fruit. The *kaki* is also greatly prized for its magnificent and spectacular autumn colours, in a wonderful array of orange, yellow, orange-red and violet shades. The large, pendulous and attractively glossy leaf emerges bronze-green, has a hairy underside and changes to dark green in summer. At the end of June or early July *Diospyros kaki* bears inconspicuous pale yellow, bell-shaped flowers which are very attractive to bees. *Diospyros kaki* has a grey-brown bark which is deeply grooved in older specimens.

*Diospyros kaki* prefers a site on slightly acid and fertile, moist soil where the tree can develop deep roots. Tolerant of some shade but - due in part to its somewhat tender foliage - the tree performs best in a very sunny site in cities and other warm micro-climates. *Diospyros kaki* is a true park and garden tree. The edible fruits are highly decorative but can be a nuisance when they drop on pavements.

### TYPES OF PLANTING

**Tree types:** standard trees, half-stem trees, multi-stemmed trees, characteristic trees, fruit trees | **Topiary on stem:** multi-stem umbrella

### USE

**Location:** park, central reservation, large garden, small garden, patio, cemetery | **Pavement:** none, open | **Planting concepts:** food forest

### CHARACTERISTICS

**Crown shape:** wide egg-shaped | **Crown structure:** dense | **Height:** 6 - 9 m | **Width:** 4.5 - 7.5 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 8A - 11B

### ASPECTS

**Wind:** slightly tolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** dry, moist | **Light requirements:** sun, partial shade | **pH range:** acidic, neutral, alkaline | **Host plant/forage plant:** birds, small mammals, humans

### PLANTKENMERKEN

**Flowers:** bell-shaped, discrete | **Flower colour:** daffodil | **Flowering period:** June - July | **Leaf colour:** dark green | **Leaves:** deciduous, ovate, big, polished, underside hairy | **Autumn colour:** yellow-brown, orange-red | **Fruits:** striking, edible, large, aromatic | **Fruit colour:** orange | **Bark colour:** grey-brown | **Bark:** deeply furrowed | **Twig colour:** cinnamon-brown | **Twigs:** bare | **Root system:** deep, extensive, tap root

