

## *Diospyros texana*: Texas Persimmon<sup>1</sup>

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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 one 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.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Diospyros texana*

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

**Common name(s):** Texas Persimmon



**Figure 1.** Middle-aged *Diospyros texana*: 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

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



Figure 2. Range

**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

**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

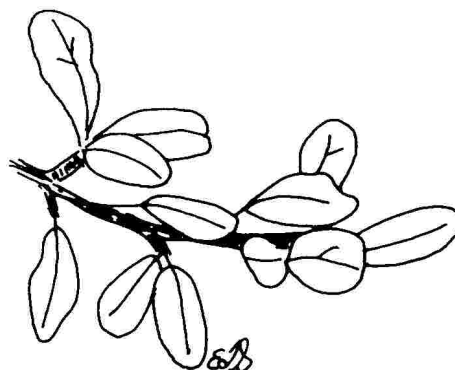
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**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 which drop for a short period of time, this is a



**Figure 3.** Foliage

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 five 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.