PERSIMMONS

Persimmons are attractive trees for our landscapes. Red-orange colored fruit mature in late summer and early fall when the leaves begin to develop color. Plant them in the yard for color or shade and get the benefit of fresh fruit.

The medium sized trees are deciduous, losing their leaves in the winter months. Locate them on the south and west side where they allow winter heat to warm the house.

Native persimmons bear attractive tomato shaped fruit which is favored by squirrels, possums and raccoons. Old timers like me enjoy them when they are fully ripe and soft as pudding. The native Florida persimmons are astringent until fully mature and pucker your mouth when not dead ripe.

New oriental persimmons are a far cry from the native type according to many folks’ taste preference. Oriental persimmons are non-astringent and can be eaten when the fruit has developed color even though the fruit is firm like an apple. They are most popular with our residents of Asian descent and are found in many local Asian markets.

The original oriental persimmon seeds were imported in the mid 1800’s. Persimmons now grow throughout the southeastern United States.

The non-astringent varieties for our area include Fuyu, also called ‘Fuyugaki’, ‘Hanafuyu’, ‘IZU’, ‘O’Gosho’, and Matsumoto Wase Fuyu. Regardless of the nursery, look for these names and you should have good success.

Persimmons are easy care trees requiring little water and fertilizer. In fact, excessive fertilizers cause vigorous growth and fruit drop. They need well-drained soil in full sun and will not do well in wet areas. Allow them room to spread 15 to 20 feet for best growth.

Containerized trees can be planted any time of the year. Many times, catalogs carry bare root trees that should be planted in December or January. This allows time for the roots to become established before the trees leaf out in the spring.

Prepare the planting area by digging a hole wider and only as deep as the root ball or container. Spread the roots of bare root trees and water as you fill the hole with soil.

Prepare a water ring by scooping soil in a ring around the trunk to create a basin for water to enter the soil over the roots. Fill the water ring to settle the soil and wet the soil around the roots. Keep weeds and grass away from the trunk.

Mulch is beneficial to keep weeds under control and conserve water. Spread natural mulch 3 - 4” deep and in a circle 2 - 3’ around the trunk.

Once young trees are established, trees may only need watering once every 7 to 10 days in dry weather.

New trees planted in the winter won’t need fertilizer until April or May. They need less fertilizer than citrus but can be cared for in a similar way. Use about one half to one pound of 10-10-10 or similar fertilizer for the first year. The following years, increase the rate to one half to one pound per year of tree age per tree per year. Split the application so half is applied in January and the rest is spread in June when our rains begin. For example, a three year old tree should get 1 and one half to three pounds of fertilizer with three quarters of a pound to a pound and one half applied in January and than again in June.
Persimmons are self fruitful and set fruit without the need for a pollinizer variety. When a pollinizer is present, the fruit forms large brown seeds and the flesh inside will be brown instead of orange. This unusual characteristic does not affect the eating quality of the fruit.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important component of a healthy diet. Consider adding edible plants to your landscape. Why not try persimmons as your next incredible edible landscape plant?

Learn more about the many edible landscape plants by calling the Osceola County Extension Service at (321) 697-3000. There are many fact sheets available through our University of Florida EDIS web link on our web page at http://osceola.ifas.ufl.edu.

Learn and share with others and get more detailed information on a variety of home landscape and garden topics at the upcoming Master Gardener volunteer training which begins on Tuesday, September 26. Call or stop by to get an application packet and set up an appointment for an interview. Time is running out!

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