

Wallsend Nurseries

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Persimmons

Persimmons are an old type of fruit almost forgotten until recently. Only older gardeners remembered the sweet, distinctive flavour of a ripe persimmon. This is probably because the older varieties are inedible until fully ripe as the fruit has a very disagreeable astringent taste. Once fully ripe and soft it tastes superbly sweet and unlike any other fruit.

Persimmons are an attractive bright orange colour when ripe with a smooth skin and tomato like appearance. They ripen on the tree in late autumn to early winter after the tree has dropped all of its foliage.

They should be clipped from the tree when fully coloured and stored at room temperature until soft, when the bitter taste is replaced by the distinctive persimmon flavour.

Modern persimmons can be eaten whilst still firm and are called “non astringent” varieties. These are very popular and are appearing more and more frequently in grocer’s shops and super markets. There is no need to wait until soft to enjoy the fruit and it is delicious lightly chilled.

Persimmon trees are handsome and deciduous. They have dark green glossy foliage which colours brilliantly in autumn before falling. The ripening fruits hang on the tree for months and are most attractive in themselves.

The tree thrives in temperate to sub tropical regions in a position sheltered from strong winds which can damage the brittle wood. On planting, the tree is trained like most other deciduous fruit trees to form an open “vase shaped” framework. This promotes good aeration within the tree centre which in turn lowers the probability of disease.

Fruit is borne on current season’s wood so it is important to encourage as much growth as possible by removing older laterals that have produced fruit previously.

Growing requirements are simple. You need to provide a reasonably rich, well composted, well drained soil and an open sunny position sheltered from strong winds. Application of a complete fertiliser such as

Citrus food in early spring will be of benefit. Provide plenty of summer moisture.

The trees are grafted onto vigorous rootstock to provide heavy cropping and hardiness.

Place a good layer of mulch such as shredded sugarcane around the tree during hot weather to retain soil moisture and help deter weeds.

Pruning is only required initially to shape the young tree. As the tree matures removal of any dead or diseased branches and those that produced fruit the previous season is all that will be needed.

There are few disease problems with persimmons although fruit fly is a major pest. Spraying and baiting should be carried out as the fruit ripens to help prevent infestations.

These days it is harder to find the old astringent varieties as the newer non astringents are more popular. The best of the non astringents is called “Fuyu” or is sometimes referred to as “Fuji”.