American persimmon seedlings

Blackford Valley Farm | Planting guide

American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) is a native fruit tree valued for sweet, fully ripe fall fruit and wildlife food. Seedlings vary in fruit quality, hardiness, and timing; they are not copies of a selected parent.

Site and growth

- **Space:** Plan for a medium-sized tree, often roughly **30–60 feet** tall where conditions favor it. Give the crown room and expect some root sprouts in suitable sites.
- **Light and soil:** Full sun favors fruiting. It tolerates a range of soils, but a **well-drained** spot with dependable moisture during establishment is a good starting point. Test unusual soils and avoid persistent standing water.
- **Climate:** Cold hardiness differs among seed sources; some selections tolerate colder sites than others. Check the local hardiness zone and the origin of the planting stock when available.

Soil, roots, and water

NC State favors **moist, well-drained sandy soil** and lists clay, loam, and acidic-through-alkaline adaptability; USDA describes best ecological growth on bottomland clay and heavy loam. These observations support varied textures where roots remain aerated, not one universal soil preference or a numerical pH optimum for fruit production. Wet-site occurrence does not establish a safe flood duration. Test before liming or acidifying; unusually basic soil warrants checking nutrient availability if growth is poor, not automatically rejecting the species.

The deep taproot makes transplanting established trees difficult. Plant in a permanent location with penetrable soil and space for lateral roots and sprouts; rock, compacted layers, or saturated subsoil can restrict rooting. Preserve the taproot within the intact potted root ball during transplanting. Established trees tolerate hot, dry conditions and poor soil, but may remain small and shrub-like there; tolerance does not promise vigorous growth or a heavy fruit crop.

Check moisture beneath mulch frequently while roots establish. Water slowly when the planted root zone begins drying and let excess drain; mature trees usually need less supplemental water, but prolonged drought can still constrain growth and fruit development. Persistent saturation deprives roots of oxygen and can cause decline or death. Dependable moisture and fertile, aerated soil support canopy growth and fruit development on female trees; sex, pollen, weather, and genetics still matter. Leaf spot can occur; soil stress alone does not identify a disease.

Planting for fruit

Most seedling persimmons are male or female, and their sex cannot reliably be chosen from a young seedling. Plant **several unrelated seedlings** to improve the chance of both sexes and overlapping bloom. Female trees bear the fruit; male trees provide pollen. Seedlings commonly take **around seven years** to start, with wide variation. Fully soften fruit before eating: unripe American persimmons can be sharply astringent. Fallen ripe fruit also feeds wildlife, including deer. Fruiting female trees can draw deer to a hunting property in fall, but drop timing and deer visits vary by seedling and site.

Plant your potted seedling

We sell and recommend **potted seedlings**. Our planting method requires a **square hole, not a round one**. A wider hole is preferred, not required; it must fit the root ball without squeezing it. Dig no deeper than the root ball in its pot, and shallower as needed to leave the **top of the root ball slightly above surrounding ground level**. Rest it on firm soil so it does not settle too deep. Water the pot before removal; support the root ball, not the stem, and keep it together. Check for circling roots rather than forcing a root-bound ball into the hole. Backfill

around the sides with native soil, taper soil to cover exposed side roots, and water thoroughly. Keep the root flare exposed; do not pile soil or mulch over the ball's top or against the trunk. Check both the root ball and nearby soil for moisture while roots establish.

Protect and establish

A ventilated, staked **5–6-foot tube or effective tall cage** is close to essential on sites with browsing animals. Protection matters for **deer, rabbits, mice, and voles**: small rodents can girdle a tree near ground level and kill it. Secure the tube base, keep grass short and a weed-free ring around it, and inspect inside for nests or chewing. A loose tube does not exclude voles tunneling underneath. Water in dry spells and remove or enlarge the guard before it constricts the trunk.

A good fit for

Mixed wildlife plantings or home orchards with room for multiple seedlings and patience for the first harvest.

Learn more

Use the soil-location map to screen survey pH layers, drainage, water storage, and rooting restrictions where recorded. Survey estimates are not a soil test or field inspection of the planting spot. Verify actual soil depth and seasonal wetness and test before amendments. The map does not measure current moisture or predict fruit yield.

- NC State Extension: American persimmon soils, taproot, and drought tolerance
- USDA: common persimmon plant guide and bottomland soil observations
- NC State Extension: soil depth, aeration, pH, and nutrient availability
- University of Minnesota Extension: establishment watering and mulch
- University of Minnesota Extension: American persimmon breeding and fruiting
- University of Missouri Extension: fruit and nut trees for wildlife
- Penn State Extension: tree planting and vole protection