persimmon
Diospyros virginiana

FEATURES

Persimmon is a deciduous tree that may grow to a height of 50 feet and a trunk diameter of one foot. At one time, in the Wabash River valley of Illinois, persimmon trees of three feet in diameter were known. This tree's bark is dark gray to black and is divided into squared blocks. The slender, brown twigs are smooth or hairy and usually have lenticels (raised spots used for gas exchange). Leaves are arranged alternately on the branches. Each of the simple leaves is elliptical to oval, pointed at the tip and tapered at the base. A leaf may be five inches long and about two and one-half inches wide. The smooth, dark green leaf is shiny on the upper surface and pale on the lower surface. The leafstalk may be as much as one inch long. The male (staminate) and female (pistillate) flowers develop on separate trees. The tubular, male flowers are clustered in groups of two to three. Each male flower is about one-half inch long. Female flowers are solitary. The female flower is about one-half to three-fourths inch long. Sometimes flowers with both male and female structures may be found. The fleshy spherical, yellow-orange to orange fruit is a berry. A single fruit may be up to two inches in diameter and contains a few seeds.

BEHAVIORS

Persimmon may be found in the southern two-thirds of Illinois. It grows in fields, wood edges, dry woods and along roads. Flowers are produced from May through June. Bees are the pollinating agent. Fruits provide a food source for mammals, who disperse the seeds in their waste products. The wood of this tree is used for golf club heads and billiard cues.

TAXONOMY
Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Magnoliophyta
Class: Magnoliopsida
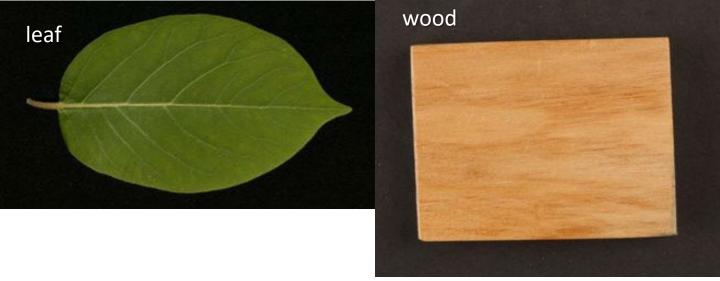Order: Ebenales
Family: Ebenaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS
common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent

leaf

wood

bark

persimmon date pudding with cherry carnival sauce

Aquatic Habitats
none

Woodland Habitats
upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats
edge