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Erratum
Article should be in Volume 24 No 4
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Persimmon

A few consignments of locally produced persimmons appear in Perth shops every year. They have never made much impact.

However, in Japan and China, the persimmon is the most important traditional tree fruit, and is eaten fresh or dried.

Today's commercial persimmon varieties originated in the Orient, but one closely allied species is a native of southern United States of America.

Commercial potential
The greatest drawback to the commercial development of persimmons in Western Australia has been the astringency of the older cultivated varieties. These astringent types are unpalatable until they are so soft-ripe that the flesh is almost jelly-like when the skin is peeled away.

However, non-astringent varieties are grown extensively in Japan and China. These can be eaten when firm-ripe. Some of these varieties have been introduced to Western Australia. For the best marketing results, the astringent varieties should be harvested at the right stage of maturity then pre-ripened before marketing.

It is possible that if non-astringent varieties were cultivated, and astringent types were given appropriate pre-marketing treatment, the fruit could gain popularity on local markets. Also, they could hold prospects for out-of-season marketing in Asian countries where they are regarded as a traditional fruit.

Variety selection will play an important part in any market development.

Growth details
The edible oriental persimmon (Diospyros kaki L.) belongs to the ebony family. It is a relatively slow growing tree, five to six metres tall.

It will tolerate a wide range of climatic conditions and is adaptable to many soil types. It should grow in most areas of the South-West of the State, but would require summer irrigation.

It should be grafted for best fruiting results.

Most varieties of persimmon bear female flowers only, producing seedless fruit. Other varieties may regularly bear both male and female flowers, while others again, vary from season to season, producing either male or female flowers.