



Merry Christmas & a happy New Year

Leefwereldverbeters

Photo: Fruits of the *Diospyros lotus*



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TREE & PLANT NURSERY SINCE 1791

Diospyros lotus (*Date-plum or Caucasian persimmon*)

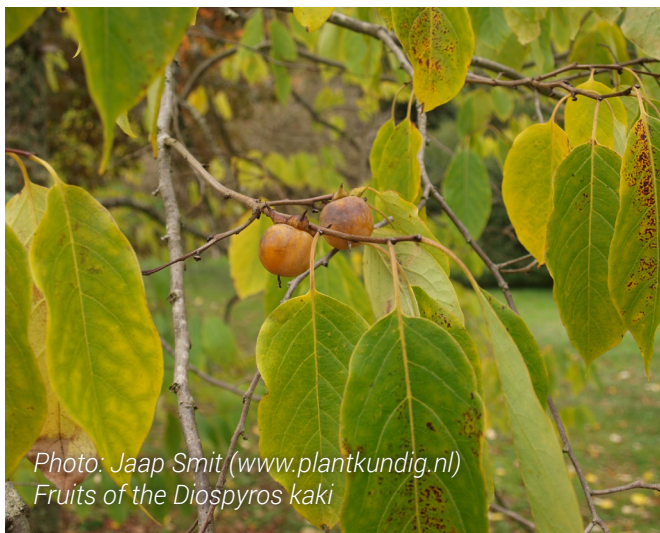
We would like to end this memorable and sometimes difficult year, 2020, with a description of a beautiful botanical variety. This year we have chosen *Diospyros lotus*. The tree is native to southeast Europe and central and western China. The name 'date-plum' is derived from Greek, *dios pyros*, meaning 'God's fruit'. The Chinese and Japanese used to make medicines from the various parts of the *Diospyros kaki* and the name 'God's fruit' could be connected to this.

An extremely old male specimen of *Diospyros lotus*, which was planted in 1740, can be found in the Hortus in Leiden. It is one of the oldest trees in the Hortus. Because this is a male specimen, the monumental tree never bears fruit. A young female specimen was planted in the Fern Garden in Hortus in 2002 which produces small fruits each year. One of the striking characteristics of *Diospyros lotus* is the strongly grooved bark that develops as the tree ages.

Diospyros lotus is dioecious: a tree that is either male or female. Female trees bloom in the months of June and/or July with very small pink-white flowers that are grouped together in twos or threes. The relatively large calyx is striking during flowering. The male flowers are brown.

The fruits that appear on the female specimens of *Diospyros lotus* are small, round and shiny. These yellow lotus fruits or date plums are edible, if you like them. They are sweet but unfortunately, cannot be kept for long.





*Photo: Jaap Smit (www.plantkundig.nl)
Fruits of the Diospyros kaki*



*Photo: Hans Clauzing
Monumental Diospyros
lotus in the Hortus
botanicus in Leiden*



*Photo: Ripe fruits of
the Diospyros lotus*

The fruits ripen and turn blue/black in the months of October/November. The leaves are on short stems, are oval-shaped with pointed ends and have smooth edges. The foliage is dark green, shiny on the top and hairy underneath. The golden yellow autumn colour of the Diospyros lotus adds to the ornamental value of the tree in autumn.

We currently grow Diospyros lotus as a female tree and multi-stemmed shrub on our nursery. The tree is ideal for parks, gardens or green spaces. In general, it thrives in the Netherlands but can be frost-sensitive. The tree is best planted in a sheltered spot. In our climate, the tree often does not grow taller than 6 to 9 metres. In warmer climates it can reach up to 15 to 25 metres tall.

The genus Diospyros includes no less than 500 varieties of plants. Most of these varieties grow in the tropics but a number of them can be found in temperate regions.

A well-known cultivar with edible fruits is the Diospyros Virginiana, which is native to the eastern region of North America. The fruits of this variety, so-called date plums, are grown on a relatively large scale for the commercial market.

The Diospyros kaki is grown in southern countries (Northern Italy and Spain) for its well-known kaki fruit. However, there are hundreds of cultivars that vary when it comes to frost sensitivity and fruit yield. The Sharon is a well-known kaki variety, the name of which is derived from the valley in Israel, where it is grown for its delicious fruit. The Sharon and Persimmon kaki, among others, can be bought in the supermarket in late autumn. It is a firm, sweet fruit that is ideal for fruit salad.

Dendrologist Jaap Smit (www.plantkundig.nl) has provided a photo of Diospyros kaki which he took himself. The kaki fruits do not appear on the tree until it is 10 to 15 years old.





Photo: Hans Clauzing
Monumental Diospyros lotus in the Hortus botanicus in Leiden