

Nat Theo Club

FIELD NOTES

ISSUE #77



Persimmon

DECIDUOUS TREE

HABITAT

Native to the southeastern United States. It is a common tree in valleys, fields, and developing forests.

TREE DESCRIPTORS

This tree has very strong wood. Its leaves are dark green, shiny, and feel a little like leather. The bark looks like scaly alligator skin (see below). The tree grows small fruit that turns orange-pink when it's ripe. Animals including turkey, opossums, raccoons, and deer love to eat the fruit when it falls to the ground.



HAVE YOU EATEN FRUIT THAT WASN'T QUITE RIPE?

When I moved to Nashville, I was introduced to a new tree species that I did not have in my hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan. The persimmon tree was easy to learn because of its squared "alligator" bark. It truly looked like alligator skin! I knew the kids I guided on hikes would enjoy learning about this tree.

I didn't get to taste the fruit from this tree until fall. After a frost or freeze, the colorful fruit falls to the ground and feeds lots of animals. I picked up one of the soft fruits and took a bite. It was very sweet and mushy, and it tasted kind of like a date. I thought it would taste great in a persimmon bread. So, I gathered a bunch of them, removed the skin and seeds, and made a delicious loaf of bread.

The next year, I found the same persimmon tree, and the fruit was still ripening. I had heard that unripe persimmons aren't good to eat, but I wanted to try one anyway. As soon as I took a bite, my mouth felt super dry—like all the spit was gone. It was a strange feeling that I'll never forget. I decided I wouldn't try that again.

CAUTION: Before trying any fruit in the wild, make sure you ask a knowledgeable adult!

Have you ever tried a green banana? They don't taste very sweet because they're not ripe yet. As fruit ripens, the seeds inside get ready to grow. God made fruit to be eaten when the seed is ready. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3 that there is a right time for everything. That means sometimes we need to wait and be patient. Matthew 12:33 says, "A tree is recognized by its fruit." That means a persimmon tree won't grow apples, and a maple tree won't grow acorns. Good trees grow good fruit. When you trust God and follow Him, He helps you grow good things in your life—like kindness and love—so others can see them too.