

# Persimmon Genetics and Breeding

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The oriental persimmon (Japanese persimmon or kaki), *Diospyros kaki*, is believed to have originated in China and it has been an important food source in China, Korea, and Japan from prehistoric times. The name persimmon was given to the American species, *D. virginiana*, by the Algonquin Indians of Virginia. However, today, the name is used generically in the United States for both species. In some countries, the oriental persimmon is called by its species name, kaki.

Kaki fruit is very attractive, ranging in color from yellow, orange, to deep red when mature. Even the leaves turn red in autumn season, making the species an attractive ornamental. In 1998, the global production of persimmon totaled 2,071,523 tonnes, 66.4% from China, 14.5% from Japan, and 12.6% from Korea (FAO, 1999). Persimmon has limited popularity elsewhere. However, Italy, Israel, and Brazil are now producing substantial amounts, and were responsible for 6.3% of the total global production in 1998. These countries have developed their own cultivars such as 'Kaki Tipo' in Italy, 'Triumph' in Israel, and 'Lama Forte' in Brazil (Sugiura and Subhadrabandhu, 1996). Recently, Australia and New Zealand have started to produce persimmon mainly for export, and the United States is also producing persimmon on a small scale.

As most cultivars of persimmon were established a long time ago, new cultivars, especially non-astringent cultivars with good fruit quality, have been awaited worldwide. In this review, we will discuss persimmon genetics and breeding with a special reference to astringency, and describe the botanical background of persimmon, the current situation