37. *Diospyros virginiana* L.

**Persimmon**

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The largest known Persimmon tree in Michigan is in the city of Grand Rapids in Kent County, in the southwest part of the Lower Peninsula.

*Description of the species:* Persimmon is a member of the mostly tropical family Ebenaceae. It is the only member of this family known to be growing in Michigan. The Persimmon ranges “from Connecticut and southeastern New York west to southeastern Iowa, south to southern Florida and eastern Texas” (Grimm 1983). From the range statement, it may be inferred that the persimmon trees which occur in Michigan are planted and are not naturally occurring populations. The tree can most readily be recognized by its yellowish or orange fruits which are about an inch in diameter (see Fig. 1), and are subtended by four persistent calyx lobes. The twigs lack a terminal bud and the lateral buds have only two bud scales showing. The leaves are simple, alternate, on pubescent petioles \( \frac{1}{4} - 1'' \) long, with blades ovate, rounded at the base, 2–5” long and 1–2” wide.

*Location of Michigan’s Big Tree:* The largest Persimmon in Michigan is located behind the house at 1716 North Center Avenue, in Grand Rapids. The site can be reached by taking the Ann Street exit (Exit #88) from U.S. 131 on the north side of Grand Rapids and heading east 0.6 mile to Center Avenue; turn right onto Center Avenue and go to #1716, a gray house with white trim at the time the tree was last measured. The GPS coordinates for the location are latitude N 42° 59.672′ and longitude W 85° 40.051′. Thanks to Fred Nietering for help in locating this tree.

*Description of Michigan’s Big Tree:* The tree has a single, solid, healthy trunk. Its girth at 4.5’ above the ground was 95″ when measured on 5 June 2003. The tree was 55’ high and had an average crown spread of 45’. It was flowering at the time it was measured and is said to produce fruits prolifically in the fall. (As both ’possums and people know, the fruits only become sweet and edible after the first frost.)

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

If you would like to join in extending this series of articles by visiting and describing one or more of Michigan’s Big Trees, please contact Elwood B. Ehrle for help with locations, specifications for taking measurements, and assistance.
with the manuscript. The Michigan Botanical Club encourages your involvement in this activity. Please remember to ask permission before entering private property. For the most recent list of Michigan’s Big Trees, see Ehrle (2003).

LITERATURE CITED