
BLACK SAPOTE

Zapote, Black persimmon

Diospyros digyna

Ebenaceae Family

ECHO PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

ORIGIN – *Diospyros digyna* is native to coasts of Mexico and lowlands of Central American. The Spaniards spread it to the Philippines in the 1700's and to Hawaii, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The tree grows very well in Southern Florida.

USES – The ripened fruit has darkening skin, turning muddy green. Inside is a very dark brown mushy pulp, soft, and sweet in flavor. It is a common fruit in markets in Mexico from August to January. In Florida, the fruit ripens between December and February. Sometimes called the chocolate fruit because of its dark fleshy appearance and sweet taste. It may have 1-10 flat smooth seeds inside. There are seedless varieties. The wood of the tree can be used for furniture. And the leaves have been used as an astringent.

CULTIVATION – The tree has a nice shape and is broad topped and slow growing reaching 80 ft in height. The tree has a wide range of adaptability to various terrains. The tree is usually grown from seeds, which remain viable for several months in dry, cool storage. The tree is naturally vigorous and receives little or no cultural attention although it can benefit from fertilization. Seedlings are transplanted to pots and set in the field when they are 1-2 years old. They should be spaced 40 ft apart. Most begin to bear fruit in 5-6 years. The tree will survive frost during its first few years if protected. After the tree is established, it can tolerate 28° – 30° F. It can be cultivated up to 5,000 feet.

HARVESTING AND SEED PRODUCTION – Fruits can be picked unripe (bright green) and allowed to ripen in 10 days at room temperature. Olive green fruits will ripen in 2-4 days. The seeds will germinate 30 days after planting. The tree can also be air-layered.

PESTS AND DISEASES – This tree is relatively free of pest and disease problems.

COOKING AND NUTRITION - It has twice the ascorbic acid content as oranges. In the Philippines the pulp is served as a dessert with a little milk or orange juice poured over it. It can be used as a pie or pastry filling and has been made into ice cream. It can be mashed and mixed with orange juice and served with whipped cream. It can also be made into a beverage by blending it with pineapple juice.