



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: March 8, 2024

BILL NUMBER: SB 74

SHORT TITLE: State Designations - State Fruit - Persimmon

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Department of Agriculture supports SB 74, which establishes the Persimmon as Maryland's State Fruit. The American Persimmon or American date plum's name is derived from the Powhatan word "putchamin". Persimmons are the fruits of a group of trees that belong to the ebony family (scientifically called the *Diospyros virginiana*). This species of persimmon is native to Maryland and much of the East Coast in the United States.

The wild American persimmon was well-known by native Americans, who used its hardwood, consumed the fruits, and introduced them to the European colonists. The fruits were dried like prunes for storage. In addition to its unique sweet but tangy flavor, the persimmon has many traditional medicinal uses ranging from treating sore throats and mouths, to indigestion, thrush, and heartburn. A bark infusion of persimmon, alder, white walnut, and wild cherry was used for toothache. The persimmon fruit, which usually ripens in fall, is often used in jams and baked goods. The fruit pulp can be turned into molasses, and the seeds can be turned into a peanut-like oil or roasted and used as a coffee substitute. Dried leaves make a great tea high in vitamin C.

While the majority of the market on persimmons is dominated by the Asian Persimmon in both imports and exports, there is a domestic market for the American Persimmon. The marketing season for fresh persimmons are the fall months of September through December. With a state designation, Maryland could see an increase in demand for American Persimmons. Direct sales through farm stands and farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), U-pick operations, and other means are potential benefits of the designation and could boost local economies. MDA requests a favorable report on SB 74.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, at Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov or (410) 841-5886.