

Favorable SB0159 State Designation-State Fruit-American Persimmon (Sen. Ellis sponsor)
EEE Committee 3/13 1:00 p.m.

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

As a volunteer with the Prince George's County Audubon Wildlife Habitat Program, I ask that you support this bill to designate the American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) as the State Fruit of Maryland. As wildlife habitat advisors, we provide guidance and support to homeowners and communities who want to create or improve the wildlife habitat value on their property.

The American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) is an excellent plant whose fruit is sought after by humans and wildlife. It was well known by native Americans who used its hard wood, consumed the fruit for food and medicine, and introduced them to European colonists. The genus name, *Diospyros*, translates as "Fruit of the Gods." When ripe, the fruit is edible and delicious, and can be used in jams and baked goods.

But the benefits don't stop there. It is a highly valued wildlife food. Persimmon pollinators include honeybees, bumblebees, little carpenter bees, digger bees, mason bees, leaf cutting bees, and cuckoo bees, etc. The fruits are consumed by bears, deer, coyote, fox, raccoons, opossum, quail, squirrel, wild turkey, and more. The leaves are host to 45 butterfly and moth species. In addition to being a nutritional powerhouse, the American Persimmon is quite hardy and attractive !

With its variety of historic and current uses and benefits, we urge a favorable report on SB 0159.

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