

# Pomegranate Planting Instructions

**Adaptation:** Pomegranates prefer a semi-arid mild-temperate to subtropical climate and are naturally adapted to regions with cool winters and hot summers. The tree can be severely injured by temperatures below 12° F

## DESCRIPTION

**Growth Habits:** The pomegranate is a neat, rounded shrub or small tree that can grow typically 12 to 16 ft. in height. Pomegranates live for a very long time. There are specimens in Europe that are known to be over 200 years of age.

**Flowers:** The attractive scarlet, white or variegated flowers are over an inch across and have 5 to 8 crumpled petals and a red, fleshy, tubular calyx which persists on the fruit. The flowers may be solitary or grouped in twos and threes at the ends of the branches. The pomegranate is self-pollinated as well as cross-pollinated by insects. Cross-pollination increases the fruit set. Wind pollination is insignificant.

**Fruit:** High temperatures are essential during the fruiting period to get the best flavor. The pomegranate may begin to bear in 1 year after planting out, but 2-1/2 to 3 years is more common. Under suitable conditions the fruit should mature some 5 to 7 months after bloom.

## CULTURE

**Location:** Pomegranates should be placed in the sunniest, warmest part of the yard or orchard for the best fruit, although they will grow and flower in part shade. The attractive foliage, flowers and fruits of the pomegranate, as well as its smallish size make it an excellent landscaping plant.

**Soil:** The pomegranate does best in well-drained ordinary soil.

**Soil pH.** - Neutral to slightly acidic soil is best for pomegranates. They will still survive under considerably more acidic or alkaline conditions, but a pH range of 5.5 to 7.0 is best.

### Irrigation and Drainage

Drainage is one of the most important things to consider when you choose a location to grow pomegranate. Pomegranates demand well-drained soil, and they will not fare well in a location where the ground becomes wet and waterlogged. Irrigation is usually not necessary in most areas because pomegranates can withstand significant periods of drought. Fruiting can be diminished in drought conditions, so watering may be helpful if you are growing pomegranate primarily for its fruit.

### Fertilization

A pomegranate tree needs adequate nitrogen for best growth, because nitrogen supports growth of foliage and production of flowers that eventually set fruit. You can use ammonium sulfate, a high-nitrogen fertilizer, or a balanced 10-10-10 formula, starting in spring after the tree begins to show new growth.

**Pruning:** Since the fruits are borne only at the tips of new growth, it is recommended that for the first 3 years the branches be judiciously shortened annually to encourage the maximum number of new shoots on all sides, prevent straggly development and achieve a strong well framed plant. After the 3rd year, only suckers and dead branches are removed.

**Pests and Diseases:** Pomegranates are relatively free of most pests and diseases. Minor problems are leaf and fruit spot and foliar damage by white flies, thrips, mealybugs and scale insects. The roots are seldom bothered by gophers, but deer will browse on the foliage.

**Harvest:** The fruit is ripe when they have developed a distinctive color and make a metallic sound when tapped. The fruits must be picked before over maturity when they tend to crack open, particularly when rained on. The pomegranate is equal to the apple in having a long storage life. It is best maintained at a temperature of 32° to 41° F. and can be kept for a period of 7 months within this temperature range and at 80 to 85% relative humidity without shrinking or spoiling. The fruits improve in storage, becoming juicier and more flavorful.

The fruit can be eaten out of hand by deeply cutting several times vertically and then breaking it apart. The clusters of juice sacs are then lifted out and eaten. The sacs also make an attractive garnish when sprinkled on various dishes. Pomegranate fruits are most often consumed as juice and can be juiced in several ways. The sacs can be removed and put through a basket press or the juice can be extracted by reaming the halved fruits on an ordinary orange juice squeezer.

**It is important to prune your pomegranate tree when planting.**

