



Pomegranate

The pomegranate is a beautiful landscape tree that produces delicious and unique fruits. The fruits are known for being rich in antioxidants, vitamins, potassium, folic acid and iron. Native to modern day Iran, they have a long and rich history. The pomegranate is one of the earliest fruits grown by humans; records of it go back as far as 3,000 B.C. This fruit, a symbol of health, fertility, and rebirth, is linked with King Tut, Mohammed, Moses, Persephone, mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*, and in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It is thought to be the "apple tree," or the Tree of Knowledge, from the Adam and Eve story in the Bible.

Pomegranates grow to 12 to 20 feet tall into a fountain-shaped, multi-trunk shrub or tree. They are deciduous with a beautiful yellow fall color. They are one of the easiest fruit trees to grow in our area, and they are self-fertile. Pomegranates are *tolerant* of our long, dry summers, our alkaline soils, and they are pest and disease resistant. Of course, they will produce adequate fruit only with sufficient water and fertility.

Choose a location in full sun. Pomegranates are susceptible to freeze damage, so a spot on the south side of your house would be ideal. Amend soil to a depth of at least 18 inches and a width of at least 3 feet for each plant. If you have deep soil, mix into the native soil a good quality compost, such as **Lady Bug Revitalizer**. The resulting soil blend can be 30% - 50% compost. If you have shallow soil, mix into the native soil our **Lady Bug Hill Country Garden Soil** to create a raised bed. The larger you make the amended area, the better. Along with compost or soil, you can mix in a mineral supplement, such as **Lady Bug Glittering Greensand**.

Water a newly planted tree immediately. Follow with a drench of **Lady Bug John's Recipe** or Maxicrop Seaweed to help it recover from transplant shock. Water regularly, keeping the soil moist but not soggy for a few weeks. During the growing season, water every 7 to 10 days, depending on weather and soil type. Fertilize lightly with **Lady Bug 8-2-4** each April and October, increasing to full recommended rate after 4 years. Maintain a 3" layer of mulch over the root zone, such as **Lady Bug brand Sylvan formula**. If a hard freeze is predicted, or a sudden freeze after a sustained warm spell, replenish the mulch and water the tree deeply. A newly-planted tree may need to be covered with sheets or row cover to protect it from a hard freeze.

The pomegranate will grow naturally as a multi-trunked shrub. Prune it only to maintain health and desirable shape, to remove dead wood and crossing branches, and to allow light penetration for better fruit production. Some sources do not recommend trying to prune the pomegranate into a tree form; it would require regular pruning of the suckers as they emerge. Maintenance pruning should be done during the winter.

Pomegranates need 3 – 5 years to reach maturity; they are likely to drop fruit before then. In spring, pomegranates produce vibrant red or red-orange flowers. The fruit ripens in the fall, and must ripen fully on the tree. The pulp surrounding the seed can be eaten fresh or made into wine, jelly, juice, or love potions. The juicy pulp, known as the aril, and the seed are both edible, but the cream- or pink-colored membranes and the skin are not. The aril may range from sweet to tart, and the seeds taste nutty. Pomegranate fruit may be refrigerated for up to two months, or may be stored in a cool, dark place for up to a month.

Pomegranate Varieties for Central Texas – Size of fruit; Ripening time; Bloom color; Skin color; Fruit (aril) color and quality; Height of tree; Other information.

Granada – Large; August; Deep red flower; Dark red skin; Dark red, juicy fruit that is less tart than Wonderful; 18 feet; Derived from the Wonderful variety.

Sweet – Large; Early September; Orange-red flower; Pink skin; Sweet and juicy light pink fruit; 12 feet; Membranes are pink, instead of cream-colored; Seeds are softer than Wonderful's.

Wonderful – Very large; September; Orange-red flower; Blushed red skin; Rich red juicy and tart fruit; 18 feet; Wonderful is the most popular commercial variety in the U.S.; Vigorous and productive; May be slightly less freeze tolerant than other varieties.

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