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History Of Pomegranates, 'Punica Granatum'

By Pat Malcolm

Because of the many seeds found in pomegranate fruits, they were regarded as a symbol of fertility

by the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The Greek writer, Homer, wrote about pomegranates growing at Syracuse, on the island of Sicily. The Bible of the Hebrews records many references to the pomegranate, and the image of the fruit was used extensively in molding and stone sculptures found in Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, Israel.

Pomegranates, 'Punica granatum,' are native shrubs and trees found growing throughout much of the Middle East, and much of Europe. The pomegranates appear to be the dominant landscape trees growing along roadsides of Albania, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and many parts of Turkey. The pomegranate trees appeared in Spain around 800AD by the Moors. Granada, Spain, on the coast of the Mediterranean, got its name from the Latin name of the pomegranate, 'Punica granatum.' The French named the new explosive weapon, hand grenade, after the Latinized 'Punica granatum,' pomegranate, because the impact from the explosion of the weapon scattered the numerous small pieces of metal like the many seeds of the pomegranate fruit.

Cultivated extensively in Spain, pomegranates moved with the missionaries into Mexico, California, and Arizona in the 16th century. In America pomegranate trees were introduced into California by Spanish missionaries in the mid 1700's. Pomegranate fruits are ruby-red fruits about 2 to 5 inches in diameter. They resemble small apples, and derive their name from the French word, 'Pome,' meaning apple. Fruits have numerous seeds are each surrounded by a pink to purplish-red, juicy pulp which is the edible portion. The pulp is somewhat puckery to the taste.

Pomegranates, 'Punica granatum,' are dense, bushy shrubs 6 to 12 feet tall with thorny, slender branches that may be trained into small trees. Orange-red flowers appear on new growth in the spring and summer and are bell-shaped and vase-shaped. The vase-shaped flowers are normally sterile, so they will not develop into fruit. The fruit contains numerous seeds surrounded by sweet, pink, juicy, tasty pulp covered with leathery-brown to red, bitter skin, which is easily peeled. Pomegranate juice stains can be difficult to remove from clothing. This juice was used by the ancients as an ink or dye, because of its persistence in staining permanently. The thick skin surrounding the pomegranate is high in tannins, and the ancients dried the skins and made leather-like products; the thick skin gives the fruit

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a long shelf life, lasting up to two months when cooled.

When trained as a tree, pomegranates grow toward a bushy habit with many suckers arising from the root and crown area. Tree-type plants can be produced by allowing only one trunk to develop. Additionally suckers can be removed frequently around the main trunk.

Pomegranate trees pollinate themselves. Severe fruit drop during the plant's juvenile period (2–3 years) is not uncommon. Fruit drop is increased by practices favoring leafy growth such as over-fertilization and over watering. Avoid putting young plants under stressful conditions. Mature trees set and hold fruit better than younger trees.

Mature pomegranate trees develop a thick bark, which is cold hardy to temperatures tested in Georgia and have withstood the zero degrees Fahrenheit experienced in January of 1984. Younger shrubs and trees of pomegranate have thin bark that do not show a high survival rate in lower temperatures, but

the plant may be regenerated from the roots in the spring. Light annual pruning of established trees encourages the development of good quality fruit. Excessive or late applications of fertilizer tends to delay fruit maturity and will reduce color and quality.

The commercial orchard production of pomegranates is mostly concentrated in California, and the fruit begins to appear in Eastern markets in mid-October, just in time for the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

Like picking wild scuppernongs from a childhood vineyard, this is an experience that children always remember—the fun and the fulfillment of the happy days during childhood preserved in the memories of growing up. A century ago every farmer had a pomegranate plant in his yard that he had grown from a seed. Some of these plants developed into bushes and some grew into trees.

The fruit is strange looking in appearance and when opened with a knife appears even stranger inside looking like hundreds of juicy red, individual pulpy fruits, each with a removable seed Pomegranate juice is one of nature's most powerful antioxidants. Pom Wonderful Pomegranate juice has more naturally occurring antioxidant power than any other drink, more than red wine, green tea, blueberry juice and cranberry juice. Antioxidants help your body guard against free radicals; molecules that can cause premature aging, heart disease Alzheimer's, even cancer. Drink a glass today! Researchers have shown that people who drink 2 oz, of pomegranate juice each day for one week increased their body antioxidant activity by 9% in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

Another study (Nov. 2003) showed that pomegranate extract will fight skin cancer at an American Association for Cancer Research conference.

The pomegranate harvest in 2006 is expected to be the largest ever, because of the hype and excitement generated by the news of the spectacular health improvement, that can be expected by drinking only 2oz. of pomegranate juice each day, according to the Pomegranate Council, based in San Francisco, California.

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Additional health benefits offered by the pomegranate fruit results from the minerals: Calcium, Iron, Potassium, Phosphorus, and the Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, and niacin.

Patrick A. Malcolm, owner of TyTy Nursery, has an M.S. degree in Biochemistry and has cultivated fruit trees for over three decades.

<http://www.tytyga.com>

Credit For Young People: Establishing A Credit History

By Joshua Wills

If you're like me, a teenager or young adult, just getting started in the big wide world, getting credit can be tough. Most creditors want to see a solid credit history before they give you a loan. They seem to be as clueless as I am as to how to get a credit history. After all, how do you get a credit history when you have to have one to get credit? Duh!

As frustrating as it can be for a young person, there are a few ways to get some credit history, to at least give you a little something to show the bank.

Co-signer The easiest way to get started with credit is to get a parent, grandparent, etc. to co-sign a loan for you, usually a car loan. However, for some of us, that is not an option for one reason or another. Another option you can consider is a co-signed credit card. Just be sure that you pay your bills on time, or you'll just get yourself a bad credit history and be in worse shape than when you started!

Secured Credit Card You can also get a secured credit card. You would make a deposit of perhaps \$500 to the issuing bank. They would then issue you a credit card with a \$500 limit. That protects them, and will give you a credit history. A word of warning - the leading bank that issues secured credit cards has a very bad record with the Better Business Bureau, so check out the bank first!

Secured Loan You can also get a small secured loan. You deposit \$1,000 with the bank as collateral, and they loan you \$1,000. This is really pointless, except it does give you a credit history.

Lastly, once you get some credit history, keep in mind that you may be able to get a fuel card or department store card before you can get a credit card. Check and see if the fuel / dept store card will report to the credit agencies and help improve your credit history.

One final tip - if you're buying a car and need a car loan, a good salesman will help you get a loan. That's actually how I got mine - along with a large down payment and a co-signature.

For more great resources on credit and financing, visit the Money Forum:

<http://www.gotalkmoney.com>

