



**CHESTNUT HILL**  
NURSERY & ORCHARDS

**Pomegranate**  
*Punica granatum L.*

## **Soil preparation and Planting**

Pomegranates produce best on deep, heavy loams, but are adapted to many soil types from pure sand to heavy clay. Yields are usually low on sands, while fruit color is poor on clays. Growth on alkaline soils is poor. Optimum growth is associated with deep, fairly heavy, moist soils in the pH range of 5.5-7.2. Pomegranates like a well-drained soil and although they can stand brief flooding, constant wet feed will kill the plants. Pomegranates are considered a salt-tolerant plant, but accumulations of salts in excess of .5% is harmful. If you live in an area that has high salts in the soil or water, plant the pomegranates on raised beds so the salts can drain away from the roots of the plants. In heavy-rain areas it is again advisable to plant your pomegranates on raised beds. Pomegranates will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Prepare the area by removing any weeds prior to planting. This step is often over looked but is absolutely critical to any successful planting. Weeds and grass steal light, water and nutrients from your trees.

Dig a planting hole approximately two times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Set that soil aside and mix it 50/50 with either aged compost or aged manure. Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. Set the tree in the middle of the hole. Using some soil, secure the tree in a straight position. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the native soil and mixed soil with organic matter; gently tamp it in.. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year. If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the apple clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of shredded mulch or leaf litter. Mulch around the trunk pulling the mulch a few inches away from the trunk on top of the ground.

## **Spacing**

Trees should be at least 15-20 feet apart. Pomegranate trees are self-fruitful.

## **Fertilization**

The type of fertilizer you choose may be chemical or organic. Make sure that the fertilizer contains nitrogen with minerals. With minerals are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to age of plant. The first year in a permanent location do not fertilize. The second year apply about 2 ounces of nitrogen per tree is used. By the 5<sup>th</sup> year you should be adding 6-8 ounces per tree. A mature tree of 15 years needs about ¾ pound (12 ounces) of nitrogen per year. You can use 8-8-8 with minerals or Espoma Citrus Tone Organic.

Spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 5-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. Fertilize in November and March. Excessive or late application tends to delay fruit maturity and reduce color and quality. Severe fruit drop during the plant's juvenile period (3-5years) is not uncommon. Fruit drop is aggravated by practices favoring vegetative growth such as over-fertilization and excess irrigation. Avoid putting young trees under conditions of stress. Fruit drop is less severe on mature trees than on younger trees.

## **Water**

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a pomegranate. Water the plants at longer intervals, versus shallow frequent watering. Water requirements for pomegranate are about the same as for citrus 50-60

inches per year. If you receive most of your rain in the spring and early summer, then the need for irrigation is lessened. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells. Dry winters are good and the need for water is not very great during this period although a little moisture in the soil is best. Remember they like moist, not wet, soil. Pomegranates can stand very dry conditions but to produce good fruit they need some moisture in the soil. Fruit splitting is a problem if too much water is received by the plants after the fruits start to ripen. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the pomegranate clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients.

### **Pruning**

In its natural environment, the pomegranate is a shrub and the best method of training is to leave it a multiple-trunk shrub.

Pomegranates can be grown as a single-trunk tree in the warmer sections of the country. To obtain good fruit, the plant must be pruned on a yearly basis to either a single trunk or the more desirable multiple trunks.

Pomegranates have a tendency to sprout numerous suckers even when older, these must be removed.

Pomegranates should not be pruned in any way the first year unless you plant a large potted plant. The reason for this is that the plant needs to become established that first year without any more disruption than necessary. The second year, when they are more established, you should start your pruning and training. The first thing is to pick 5-6 good sprouts. This is the best number for good fruit production in most parts of the world. Any more sprouts than the desired number should be removed at ground level. You will need to remove the suckers several times during the growing season, trying to keep your plant to 5-6 trunks. If you let it sucker freely it will put all its energy into growing and you will have little fruit. The suckers can take so much of the energy of the plant that the established larger trunks will die back, especially in the early years.

All heavy pruning should be done during the dormant/winter season, but some light pruning to open up the plants and remove suckers can be done in the summer, usually in August.

### **Harvesting**

You can have pomegranates ripening from August to the middle of October by using different varieties with different ripening times. The sweet-fruited varieties tend to ripen first, followed by the sweet – tart varieties with slight variances in both groups. The fruit must be picked right before they are fully mature or they will try to crack open (there is variances in this problem by variety.) When they give you a metallic sound when tapped they should be ready to pick. “Picking” is actually accomplished by cutting the fruit from the shrub not pulling it off.