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How to Grow Pomegranates: The Complete Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Pomegranates

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

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TRY NOW

Grow pomegranate trees for their colorful
fruit, filled with juicy edible seeds. They are

try something new? Learn how to plant, grow, and harvest pomegranates.

About Pomegranate Trees

Unlike most fruit, where we eat the flesh, pomegranates are prized for the hundreds of fruit seeds—called arils—hidden inside. They have a sweet-tart flavor, often compared to tart cherries or cranberries. They can be enjoyed fresh or made into juice or drinks.

Pomegranate trees (*Punica granatum*) are considered easy to grow. They are drought-tolerant and heat-loving and can live up to 200 years!

The trees thrive in warm climates (zones 8-10) like Arizona, California, and Texas. Even in areas with cold winters (zones below 8), however, pomegranates can be grown successfully by planting them in containers that can be brought indoors during freezing temperatures.

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Most varieties reach about 10 feet tall and wide, but they can be kept much smaller with pruning. Pomegranate trees don't require another variety to pollinate but will usually bear a heavier crop if they have a nearby friend.

Colorful orange-red flowers appear in spring or summer, and the fruit appears in late summer. Pomegranates are usually harvested in fall or early winter when the fruit becomes plump, and the skin develops a vibrant red color.

For centuries, pomegranates have been known for their health benefits, including the potential to reduce inflammation, lower the stress hormone cortisol, and even reduce blood pressure.

WHY YOU SHOULD GROW POMEGRANATE

They aren't picky about soil type or pH.

The pomegranate tree is beautiful and can live for over 200 years.

For centuries, pomegranates have been known for their health benefits, including the potential to reduce inflammation, lower the stress hormone cortisol, and even reduce blood pressure.



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PLANTING

Pomegranates thrive in full sun, ideally receiving 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight daily.

They aren't picky about soil type or pH, but they require excellent drainage and are drought-tolerant once established.



Pomegranate seeds. Credit: OZMedia

When to Plant Pomegranates

Like many fruiting shrubs and trees, pomegranates are available as bare root or potted stock. While potted stock can be planted in spring or fall, bare root stock should be planted in early spring while it is still dormant. [See where to buy your pomegranate bare roots!](#)

Plant bare-root pomegranates soon after receiving them. If you can't plant them immediately, store them in a cool, dark location to keep them dormant, and don't let the roots dry out.

Planted in spring as soon as the soil is workable (loose and crumbly enough to dig); no need to wait for frosts to be over. Potted nursery stock should be planted out after the last spring frosts have passed. They'll need to

How to Plant a Pomegranate

Planting methods for bare-root and potted nursery stock are similar, but for bare-root plants, soak the roots in a bucket of water for 12 hours before planting to ensure they are hydrated.

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Water containerized nursery stock before planting as well. The plants will emerge from their pots more easily, with less transplant shock.

1. Dig the hole twice as wide and the same depth as the root ball. The hole should have sloping sides like a bowl, not vertical sides like a soup can.

it. Hard, compact soil at the hole's edge can hinder the root growth of new plants.

3. Lightly water the soil in the hole before planting.

4. For containerized plants, loosen root-bound roots by gently scoring the root ball with a trowel

5. Spread the roots out evenly and avoid circling them around the base of the hole. Don't leave them in a clump. Bare root plant roots sometimes need encouragement to lay out. Extra-long roots may be pruned rather than allowed to coil in the bottom.

6. Backfill the hole with the native soil you removed. Pause halfway and water, then continue adding soil. Firm the soil around the roots to avoid air pockets.

7. Use extra soil to form a ring of soil, about a foot in diameter and an inch high, around the plant to keep water from running away. Give it a good drink.

tact the trunk(s). Keep it a finger-width clear.



Pomegranate orchard. Credit: Emma Grimberg

GROWING

Once established, water pomegranates deeply but not frequently. They tolerate some dry periods, and a few thorough waterings, instead of many shallow ones, will encourage the roots to grow down and out.

These trees are scrappy and tough and will grow and produce well with little attention.

Apply a generous 2 to 3-inch layer of compost in the spring as they leaf out.

Standard fruit tree pruning practices apply well to pomegranates. Pruning is best done in late winter while the tree is still dormant before dormant buds leaf out.

- Remove any dead or broken branches

- Remove crossing branches.
- Strive for an open, airy shape, allowing air to flow through the crown.
- Prune for size or shape if desired. For instance, keep your pomegranate shorter for easy harvest or confine it to one spot in your garden instead of reaching full size.
- Some pomegranates are extra ambitious and will try to grow more fruit than the branches can support. Thin the fruit on young branches to prevent the weight from breaking them later in the season.

Types

With many varieties available, including dwarf options from some vendors, choose one that suits your growing zone, space limitations, and desired fruit size

- ‘Wonderful’ is a hugely popular variety, with large crops and bright red ripe fruit.
- ‘Salavatski’ is cold hardy in zones 6 to 10. It produces medium-sized pink fruit with pink arils.

or other varieties.

HARVESTING

Pomegranate fruit starts ripening near the end of August; late-maturing varieties can ripen from October or early November.

How do you know when a pomegranate is ready to pick? Not all pomegranates turn deep red, and waiting for a lighter-colored variety to turn red will not work.

Pomegranates are ripe when:

1. Fruits lose some shininess.
2. Ridges inside the fruit become more visible from the outside.
3. Small cracks start to form.
4. Pomegranates may pull free easily.

The presence of birds around your pomegranate tree might be a clue that the fruit is ripe, as they are adept at recognizing ripeness.

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Pomegranates and pom juice. Credit:
AfricaStudios

How to Remove the Fruity Seeds

That's not a mess; that's flavor! To avoid having the red juicy seeds spray all over, open the fruit in a large bowl filled with enough water to submerge the pomegranate. You may also wish to wear an apron or kitchen gloves.

- First, place the pomegranate on a plastic cutting board and cut off the knobby top (blossom end) by about 1/2 inch around the top.
- With a knife, make shallow cuts from top to bottom in wedges like an orange, but DO NOT cut all the way into the seeds so

- Now, submerge the fruit in the water-filled bowl, gently spreading the fruit sections open.
- Brush away the seeds from the sides; the seeds will sink to the bottom.
- Now, it's easy to use a slotted spoon to scoop out the seeds. Drain in a colander.

Use the seeds to make fresh juice, eat by the handful, or add brightness to various dishes!

Storing Pomegranate Fruit

Pomegranates will last on the counter for one to two weeks. Store in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. The fruit can also be stored in the refrigerator for one to two months!

However, once you break open the fruit or remove the seeds, it lasts about five to seven days.

Freezing the Fruit

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You only freeze the juicy seeds aka arils; otherwise, the fruit will become mushy. You can also freeze the juice to preserve flavor best (versus canning).

1. To freeze the arils, line a baking sheet with wax paper and spread them out in a single layer. Freeze for up to 2 hours, then pour into a freezer bag; use within one year.
2. To freeze juice, use a freezer container, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of headspace; use within one year.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Leaf-footed bugs are the most common pest. They shelter or nest in windfall fruit at the tree's base and return the following year. To avoid this problem, clean up and dispose of or compost all fallen fruit each year.

WIT AND WISDOM

The pomegranate has been revered since ancient times for its medicinal properties; it has been used medicinally for gastroenterological ailments, ulcers, and diarrhea.

Many religions worldwide consider the pomegranate a sacred fruit that symbolizes fertility. Even in the Greek myth of Persephone, the pomegranate represented fertility, life, and rebirth.

- Jews eat this fruit at Rosh Hashanah (the New Year). This symbolism stems from the belief that the numerous seeds (arils) around 613 correspond to the 613 mitzvot or commandments in the Torah.
- In Christianity, the pomegranate symbol-

Similarly, in Islam, legend holds that each pomegranate contains one seed that has come down from paradise. Buddhists also believe this many-seeded fruit symbolizes fertility.

Here are some more [fun facts about pomegranates](#).

FRUIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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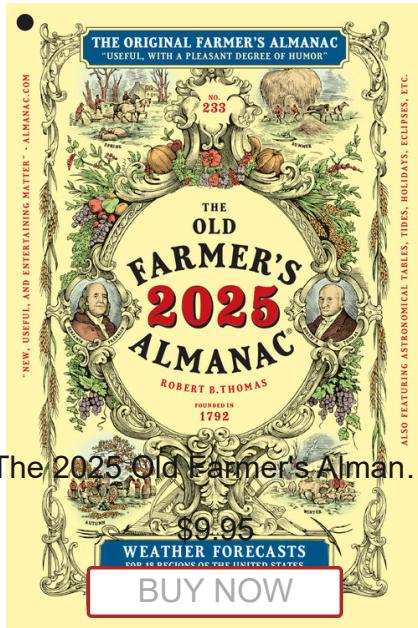
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