

How to Immediately Improve the Productivity of Mature Pomegranate Trees:
Checklist for Advisors
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Pomegranate, cultivated for centuries in Afghanistan, is one of the most popular trees in home orchards.

It is multi functional providing:

- ✓ **Food/nutrition security.** It is used in a variety of ways by Afghan households.
- ✓ **Income generation.** It has commercial value both domestically and export

It is a low input/high output crop and is very adaptable tolerating:

- ✓ poor soil
- ✓ limited irrigation
- ✓ pests
- ✓ minimal pruning

- 1) **Managing tree growth.** If the tree is mature (after 6 years from planting) look for ways to thin out the growth.
 - a) Start at soil level.
Look for root suckers . Root suckers grow up from the base of the tree should be removed as they take away valuable nutrients and water from the main tree. They can be replanted if roots are removed with the shoots.
 - b) Remove cross branches and dead wood as they affect fruit quality
 - c) Light pruning each winter to control height will help produce a healthy crop the next year. A taller tree will not produce more fruit.
- 2) **Fertilizer.** Mature trees need little fertilizer. Organic matter from composted animal manure @ 20 pounds/tree is useful. Manure can be added at anytime.
- 3) **Insects and diseases.** Few major problems with insects or diseases. A good way to insure limited pest problems is to make sure the tree canopy is open, not dense, so that light and air flows through the tree. See #1
- 4) **Watering/ moisture conservation.** If a steady supply of water is not available mulching is the best way to retain moisture in the soil. Put organic matter around the drip line of the tree at least 6 inches thick. Even with irrigation mulching has multiple benefits.
- 5) **Fruit thinning.** Remove any fruit that set after June. It will not mature and draw value nutrients from existing fruit. Once remaining fruit is the size of a golf ball select and thin leaving space of 6-8 inches between fruit.
- 6) **Harvesting.** Fruits are fully ripe when, by tapped the fruit, it should have a metallic type sound. The stem should be cut not pulled from the tree
- 7) **Storage.** Under cool dry conditions they can be stored for several months without shrinking or spoiling. Straw can be used in between layers to prevent bruising. The fruits improve in storage increasing juice volume and flavor.