PLANT FACT SHEET

Punica granatum L.

GENUS *Punica* **FAMILY** Lythraceae

COMMON NAMES Pomegranate

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Spice, Vegetable, Flowers

The juicy pulp around the seeds is eaten.
The juice can be used for a drink. It provides a red colour.
The seeds are dried with their aril and used in the Indian condiment Anardana.
The fruit are used in sauces, soups, meat dishes, salads and other dishes.
The flowers are eaten.
Boiled leaves are also reported as eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub. It grows up to 2-6 m tall. It has short thorns. It can grow up to 10 m tall. Usually trees lose their leaves at one season during the year. The trunk is covered by reddish-brown bark. Trees often sucker near the base. The leaves are opposite, entire and 8 cm x 1.5 cm. Leaves narrow towards the base. It has large scarlet flowers. These are at the ends of branches. 1-3 flowers occur together. The fruit is round, leathery skinned and up to 10 cm across. It is yellow brown in colour. Inside there are angular hard seeds in a juicy yellow pulp. The seeds are 10 mm long. There are many named varieties.

HABITAT

A Mediterranean climate plant. It is native from SE Europe to the Himalayas. It suits drier subtropical climates. It suits areas with a long hot dry summer and cool winter. A temperature of 35-38°C is best for good fruit development. A humid climate affects fruit formation. They can tolerate some salinity. It can grow in soils with a wide range of pH. They have borne fruit in Papua New Guinea at 1620 m altitude. They are mostly coastal up to 500 m in the tropics. Trees are severely damaged by temperatures below -11°C. In Brisbane Botanical Gardens. In Nepal they grow to about 2700 m altitude. It grows in the drier parts of West Africa. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zone 8-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are easily raised by seed. They are best propagated by layering or grafting but cuttings or root suckers can be used. It can be grown by air-layering. Cuttings root easily. Cuttings 30 to 50 cm long of one year old wood can be used. Pruning of sucker growth and surplus branches is needed. A spacing of 4-5 m is suitable.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow quickly. Trees bear after about 2-3 years. Fruiting is seasonal. The season tends to be Dec. to May. The tree loses its vigour after about 15 years but trees can live for many years. The pomegranate is self-pollinated as well as cross-pollinated by insects. Cross-pollination increases the fruit set. Fruit matures 5 to 7 months after flowering. Fruit need to be picked when mature to prevent splitting. Fruit do not ripen further after harvesting. Fruit develop a distinctive colour and have a metallic sound when tapped, when they are ripe. A well maintained tree can produce 150-200 fruit in a year.

NOTES

There are 2 Punica species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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