

# Plants That Produce

## POMEGRANATES

By Richard Frost

Several years ago a very bright marketing couple put their resources into marketing pomegranates. Many researchers were hired and many reports were published on the health benefits of pomegranates – although the truth is that none of the reports claiming superior health benefits were ever “peer reviewed” or considered valid scientific studies. However, with great finesse the conclusions of these reports were disseminated into popular culture and home magazines and then picked up by every health food gossip in the world. And to meet this crazed demand our heroic couple had strategically developed a plantation of over 1 million pomegranate shrubs in the well-suited climate of California's central valley. They established the ‘McDonalds’ of the pomegranate industry.

Now it is true that pomegranates are healthy for you but then again most fruits and vegetables fall into that very same category. It has also been shown that focusing your diet on one fruit is not helpful – in the long run dietary deficiencies can develop due to the composition of the particular fruit. On the other hand, if you want to have a variety of fruits but always include pomegranate with them: go for it!

While I have your attention focused on the taste of pomegranate, consider this fact: there are as many flavors of pomegranate as there are flavors of other fruits. Yeah, imagine that – pomegranate with a berry taste, a sweet grape taste, a peach taste, a Cabernet wine taste, a (nearly) banana taste, and of course those with that unique pomegranate fruit taste. Even better, you can grow or obtain most of these fruits in season right here in San Diego county.

Another aspect to be aware of with pomegranates is that the seeds range from un-noticeably soft to incredibly hard. The range of hardness is usually denoted 1 to 5 with “5” being the hardest. Those with hard seeds should not be ignored: they are often sought-after for making juice, cordials, and wine.

For those of you thinking about growing pomegranates, you should also be aware of climate-specific attributes. Those bred for the coast such as Eversweet and Golden Globe can develop harder seeds and an off-taste when grown in hot climates. The reverse is worse: those which originate or have been bred in warmer climates (e.g., Wonderful) might not mature properly or taste its best when grown in the coastal environment.

Finally, I know there are a number of fruit detective buffs reading this column! If you have not read it already, I highly recommend the book “Pomegranate Roads” by Dr. Gregory Levin, ed. by Barbara Baer.

Selected Pomegranate Varieties For Fruit Connoisseurs

Cultivar	Flavor	Seed Hardness
Myagkosemyanni Rosovyi	Excellent Fruit	1
Gissarskii	Sweet, non-acidic	1
Sirenevi	Watermelon	1
Hotuni Zigar	Boysenberry	5
Arianna	Excellent Fruit	2
Gissarskii Alyi	Flame Grape	1
Parfianka	Variable Berry	1
White Flower	Very Sweet	2
Eversweet	Light Fruit	2
Al-sirin-nar	Light Berry	2

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SDHS member Richard Frost is a certified edible gardening nut. For copies of past articles and more information, please see [www.PlantsThatProduce.com](http://www.PlantsThatProduce.com).