

Pomegranate (Punica granatum) Care Details

■ The best time to plant outside is spring/early summer to give the plant time to establish itself before the winter.

■ Punica granatum or Pomegranate trees/shrubs are suitable for most places in the UK except the harshest Scottish weather and some of the more remote parts of England and Wales. Pomegranates survive most winters unscathed by frosts (hardy to -9°C) but do not plant in a very exposed windy site. If you live in a frost prone area, these are best grown south facing in shelter, otherwise they may be damaged by frosts. In late spring frosts, the new growth may be knocked back but the plants will re-grow.

■ Pomegranates are at their best after a long dry summer followed by a cool winter in full sun or part-shade in any soil except boggy and can also be grown near the coast. Punica are deciduous trees and can reach an eventual height of 6-12ft. Pruning should ideally be done in autumn or winter when the plant is dormant as flowering occurs on the new season's growth. They sucker readily and these will need to be pruned off from the base as well as the main stem and any lateral branches. Cut the suckers as close to the branch/stem as possible with a sharp pair of secateurs. They can be pruned to a single leader (one single branch from which side shoots are produced) or several main stems enabling light to reach the center of the plant.

■ Pomegranates have red trumpet-shaped flowers, usually produced from June, followed by shiny red/green fruit when mature. The fruit vaguely resemble apples in appearance although they have what looks like a little crown at the top. Fruit should be harvested when mature and before it splits open. The fruit will continue to ripen when stored in the fridge and can be stored for months this way. The seeds juice and pulp are all edible.

■ Using 'Feed-all' controlled release fertiliser when planting (available from Easy Tropicals) will ensure that your plant is correctly fed and will grow at an optimum rate remembering to re-pot as necessary. John Innes or general multi-purpose compost will usually have sufficient food for the first 4-6 weeks, if no food is added.

■ Please have a look at www.easytropicals.com for companion ideas & a general hardiness guide. If you have any questions please email for a prompt reply or visit us at our NEW Garden Centre (details on our website).

Many thanks for looking.