

Pomegranate

GWF460
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These colourful fruits are slow to grow from seed, but easy once you've got them started.

Pomegranates are large, attractive plants with small, glossy leaves and red stems. They produce frilly, orange flowers in late spring and summer.

If you grow the plants in a sunny conservatory or greenhouse, they might even produce fruit. This is less likely on a windowsill unless it is very bright. Pomegranates do grow into large plants, about 2m high, but they can be kept shorter if you want. Pomegranate fruits are usually available in shops from Christmas into the spring.

How to grow a pomegranate

Pomegranates grow better if you take the seed from a fruit that is overripe. You can tell an overripe fruit because the skin becomes really tough and the whole fruit looks a bit wrinkly. To ensure the fruit is overripe, keep it in the fruit bowl for two weeks and it should be ready.

Carefully cut the fruit open and remove some of the flesh. Each of the little red blobs should contain a seed, so they are easy to find. Either eat some of the flesh and spit out the seeds or use a spoon to separate flesh from seed. Overripe pomegranate fruit is usually sweet and juicy. Though, if the fruit is more than two weeks overripe, it might not taste too good. Put the seeds in a

cup full of lukewarm water to wash away any stickiness, and then scoop them on to dry tissue paper using a spoon.

Look at the bottom of your plant pot and make sure there are holes to let water drain out. Fill your pot with multi-purpose compost, and water it very well so that water starts to drip out of the bottom. Use a pot about 8cm across, and sow the seeds thinly on the surface. Cover the seeds lightly with a bit more compost.

Put the pot in a see-through plastic food bag, and tie the ends together. This is to keep all the moisture in and stop the pips from drying out. Put the pot in a warm place; an airing cupboard is ideal. The seeds will grow in a few weeks, but you will need to check them every day. Add a little water whenever the compost looks dry.

When the seeds have sprouted, take off the plastic bag and put the pot on a sunny windowsill. Once the seedlings have four or five leaves, they will need separate pots. Use pots of the same compost that you used to sow the seeds, and then put them back on the windowsill.

Caring for your pomegranate

Water the plants regularly and feed them every two weeks in the summer with a general house-plant food. If you get any flowers, feed the plant with tomato food instead as this helps the fruit to grow. As your plants grow, they will need to be potted into larger pots again. You can tell that they need repotting when you see roots growing out the bottom of the pot.

Pomegranates grow into big plants, so you could either grow a large one for a conservatory or prune it regularly to keep it small enough for a windowsill.

