

Prune Like a Pro ***Pomegranate*** **2022**



TITLE: Prune Like a Pro: dwarf Pomegranate

Description: Pomegranates (*Punica granatum*) have been popular fruit throughout human history and are experiencing a surge in popularity due to the health benefits associated with their juice. Widely grown for their edible fruits, they are equally valuable as ornamental plants. Pomegranate flowers are attractive to hummingbirds.

Objective(s): Learn when and how to prune a dwarf Pomegranate

WHAT: There are “tree-sized” pomegranates, which are normally grown by orchards. There are also more compact, dwarf varieties for homeowners which can be pruned to a single trunk as a very small tree or pruned as a multi-stem shrub.

Pomegranate plants grow at a moderate pace and need no pruning in the first year or two. They usually begin to bear fruit three years after planting.

WHY: Pomegranates sucker profusely from the base, and if not removed routinely, the plants quickly become dense with many stems. If you let a pomegranate sucker freely it will put all its energy into growing branches and foliage and the result will be less fruit.

WHEN: Pomegranates flower in the summer, usually after July 1, so they should be pruned when dormant – usually late winter. February is a good month to prune pomegranates.

WHERE: Pomegranate plants perform best when planted in full sun but will flower and fruit sporadically in partial shade. They are adaptable to most TN soils, prefer a soil pH of 5.5 to 7.0, and need good soil drainage. Most pomegranate cultivars are cold hardy in USDA Zones 8 to 10, but dwarf varieties can survive Knoxville’s Zone 7 when planted in a protected area.

HOW: Pomegranates flower on new growth; therefore, pruning should be done before new growth begins in the spring. Pruning needs are minimal besides periodically removing suckers and dead wood. Light annual pruning will encourage new fruiting spurs to develop but avoid heavy pruning which will reduce fruiting.



SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS:

- Remove the 4 D's (Dead, Damaged, Diseased, Dysfunctional) at any time of year.
- Remove new suckers at any time of year
- Perform heavy pruning while dormant
 - Keep 3-6 of the healthiest and best-spaced stems
- Do not prune too much at one time
- Fruits are borne on second-year wood, so avoid topping the pomegranate bush.
- Pomegranate flowers are attractive to hummingbirds.



Additional Resources / References:

“*POMEGRANATE Factsheet*”, Clemson University, Home & Garden Information Center, publication 1359 <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/pomegranate/>

“*Pomegranate Production*”, University of Georgia Extension, Circular 997
<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C997&title=Pomegranate>

Knox County Master Gardeners website: www.knoxcountymastergardener.org

Knox County Master Gardeners Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/KnoxCountyMG>

Ask-a-Master Gardener / Knox County Extension Helpline: (865) 215-2340

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