

Flora and Fauna in Spain

Pomegranates

One of the first things I bought here in Spain for my garden was a pomegranate tree. I love the bright red coloured flowers which later produced the juice laden fruit. I suppose a pomegranate is a bit like Marmite - you either love it or hate it, hubby cannot bear all those little pips, me I love them! The smell and taste instantly take me back to my childhood when I would sit there and pick all the pith off of the fruit and sink my teeth into the juicy flesh, yum.



The fruit bearing tree is found all over the Mediterranean through to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa and the Americas, it can grow up to 8 meters tall. Known now as being one of the super fruits - rich in antioxidants and vitamins. Available all year round, in the northern hemisphere it is in season between September and January and in the southern hemisphere between March to May.

This fruit can be traced back to its origins in Persia and was cultivated in Georgia, Armenia and the Mediterranean areas for several millennia. In Armenia decayed remains dating back to 1000BC have been found.

The Moors renamed the city of Granada after the fruit during their occupation; in turn the Conquistadors introduced the fruit to Latin America. The plants can be grown in dry areas, however in wet areas they are prone to root decay from fungal diseases, but they can tolerate a moderate frost!

The name pomegranate comes from the Latin pomum (apple) and granatus (seeded). This is the influence for many languages, in German it is Granatapfel - seeded apple. In Spanish the name is Granada - being a Latin language you can see the granatus, seeded in the word, however in classical Latin the name for apple was malum and was used for most apple like fruits, the pomegranate was known as malum punicum or malum granatum. The word grenadine also comes from it, which is a pomegranate syrup used in cocktails.



Many religions have the pomegranate fruit incorporated into them, in Judaism it is a symbol of righteousness as they are said to have 613 seeds which correspond to the 613 mitzvot of the Torah. Many scholars think that the pomegranate was the forbidden fruit and not the apple in the Garden of Eden. The motif of the pomegranate in the Christian religion is found in many paintings, often in the hand of the Virgin Mary or the Infant Jesus as a symbol of the fullness of the suffering and resurrection of Christ. In the

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Qu'ran pomegranates grow in the gardens of Paradise. Every seed of the fruit must be eaten because no one knows which of the arils comes from paradise.

Many cultures use the pomegranate in cooking especially in the Middle East and India. Open the fruit by scoring it with a knife and breaking open, discard the pith exposing the arils (seed casing). The aril is the part you eat and the juice from the fruit can be either sweet or sour depending on the species. The seeds of the wild pomegranate are used as a spice called anardana which is used in Indian and Pakistani cuisine.

The medicinal properties of the pomegranate are being explored in the fight against many diseases, such as prostate cancer, diabetes and even the common cold.

Here, if you look around you, there are many pomegranate trees with bountiful fruit, so if you haven't tried them already why not pick one and enjoy. Please don't forget to ask permission to take one if the tree is on private land, but you will find lots of wild ones along the ramblas.

