



fresh picked: *the pomegranate*

by Scott Calhoun

Perhaps no other kind of ancient fruit tree has staged a comeback quite like that of the pomegranate (*Punica granatum*). Armed with new studies showing that pomegranate juice contains more polyphenol antioxidants than any other drink, including red wine and blueberry juice, California growers have vigorously promoted the consumption of pomegranates as a way to “cheat death.” In addition to touting its health benefits, growers have reminded modern shoppers of the pomegranate’s sensual history. The Chinese served sugared pomegranate seeds to wedding guests. They would roll the fruit on the floor of the wedding chamber before the marriage was consummated to ensure a fruitful union. The Greeks believed that Aphrodite, goddess of love, grew the first pomegranate tree on the isle of Cyprus.

What is less well advertised about pomegranates is how easy they are to grow in gardens, particularly in warmer parts of the country. In USDA Zones 8 through 10, pomegranates will thrive with little input from the gardener, providing many aesthetic and culinary pleasures.