

POMEGRANATE AND IT'S BENEFITS

Jaya Sharma

Assistant Professor (Horticulture), School of Agriculture, Abhilashi University, Mandi, HP

INTRODUCTION:

Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) is mostly liked table fruit in tropical and subtropical regions of the world. It is native to Iran (Persia). It is grown from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, but due to its better adaptability towards arid climate, its commercial cultivation is being done in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan. Other states where it is grown to lesser extent are Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Pomegranate being one of the hardest fruit crops is generally round or spherical in shape, with a fleshy, tubular calyx and leathery skin which often vary in colour from deep pink to rich red in colour.

Pomegranate is liked for its refreshing juice and valued for its various medicinal properties. Studies have suggested that consumption of red coloured fruit juice, such as of grapes, berry and pomegranate juices, reduces risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancers and aging. Pomegranate juice is a rich source of anthocyanins (cyaniding, delphinidin

and pelargonidin), which give the fruit and aril its red colour, and some of the phenolics and tanins (such as punicalin, pedunculagin and ellagic acid). Pomegranate juice has 3-fold higher antioxidant activity than that of red wine or green tea. The edible part of fruit contains considerable amount of acids, sugar, vitamins, polysaccharides, polyphenols and minerals. In some countries, such as Iran, the juice is a very popular beverage. In northern India, a major use of the wild pomegranate is for the preparation of "anardana" – the juice sacs being dried in the sun for 10 to 15 days and then sold as a spice.

MEDICINAL USES:

The juice of wild pomegranates has citric acid and sodium citrate which is used for pharmaceutical purposes. Pomegranate juice is used for treating dyspepsia and is considered beneficial in leprosy. The bark of the stem and root contains several alkaloids including isopelletierine which is active against tapeworms. Overdoses may lead to vomiting and



purgative, produce dilation of pupil, dimness of sight, muscular weakness and paralysis. The dried, pulverized flower buds are used as a remedy for bronchitis. It is known as a divine fruit because it is the most mentioned fruit in scriptural books. Pomegranate has anti-oxidant, anti-viral and anti-tumor properties and is said to be a good source of vitamins, especially vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E, as well as folic acid. It contains two compounds – punicalagin and punicic acid which give it all the potent benefits. By consuming pomegranates on a daily basis, or drinking the juice increases immunity, fight Type-2 diabetes, keep blood pressure in check, smoothen digestion and makes skin healthy.

Protection from free radicals:

Pomegranate is rich in anti-oxidants and thus protects our body from free radicals, which are responsible for premature ageing. Free radicals are formed by exposure to sun and due to harmful toxins in the environment.

It thins your blood:

Antioxidants present in pomegranate act as a 'thinner for your blood'. The seeds of pomegranate prevent your blood platelets from forming clots and coagulating. Prevention of atherosclerosis:

Eating pomegranates removes the excess fat and prevents the hardening of artery walls.

It acts like an oxygen mask:

Pomegranate helps to pump the level of oxygen in our blood. Due to anti-oxidants present in pomegranate, it fights free radicals, reduces cholesterol and prevents blood clot. All this eventually helps blood to flow freely and thus improve the level of oxygen in your body.

It prevents arthritis:

Pomegranate can reduce the damage of the cartilage by fighting the enzyme that causes damage. Pomegranate also has the ability to reduce inflammation.

Fights heart disease and prostate cancer:

Two studies claim that pomegranate juice has the ability to fight prostate cancer. An experiment showed that pomegranate juice slowed the growth and even killed cultured cancer cells.

Pomegranate is loaded with beneficial nutrients:

A cup of pomegranate seed contains 24 grams of sugar and 144 calories. A cup of pomegranate seeds contain following nutrients- Fiber: 7 grams, Protein: 3 grams, Folate: 16 per cent of the RDA, Potassium: 12 per cent of the RDA, Vitamin C: 30 per cent of the

RDA, Vitamin K: 36 per cent of the RDA.

It improves memory:

A study was conducted where people who had a problem with their memory were given 237 ml of pomegranate juice every day. After a certain period of time, a lot of improvement was seen in their verbal and visual memory

It lowers blood pressure:

Punicic acid is one of the main constituents of pomegranate that helps in lowering the cholesterol, triglycerides and also reduces blood pressure.

Helps in digestion:

Fibre is good for digestion, but due to our lifestyle where we are inclined towards eating junk food, we miss the goodness of fiber in our vegetables and fruits. Adding pomegranate to your everyday diet can be one of the best ways to include fibre in your daily routine. One pomegranate contains 45 per cent of your daily recommended intake of fibre.

Boosts immunity:

Being rich in anti-inflammatory compounds, pomegranates are extremely healthy for those suffering from immune-related disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. They are also rich in vitamin C, which boosts antibody production and helps in the development of immunity.

Strengthen bones:

Several studies conducted over the years have testified that regularity in eating pomegranates could be excellent for your bone health. Animal studies have also shown that the fruit could have a preventive effect on bone loss. High flavonols present in the fruit actively help fight any inflammation which could cause problems like cartilage damage and osteoarthritis.

A natural fertility booster:

There's another hidden benefit to the red fruit. A pomegranate with its rich antioxidant content has been found to lower oxidative stress levels in the body. Oxidative stress has been linked to sperm dysfunction as well as decreased fertility in women. Studies are underway to understand other potent benefits it may carry for the reproductive system.

CONCLUSION:

Pomegranate is most powerful fruit rich in antioxidants, minerals and vitamins. Pomegranate can be used in curing of various types of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Thus, consuming pomegranate on daily basis can make us healthy.