

# the pits

NEWSLETTER

Dec./Jan. 1995-96  
Volume 19 #2

## WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Arrowroot, Cherimoya, Carob,  
Date, Feijoa, Fig, Kumquat, Lemon grass,  
Longan, Malanga, Mango, Olive,  
Pomogranate, Persimmon, Papaya,  
Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Tamarillo,  
Taro, and Water Chestnut.

## SEEDS

This month, Bob Jurgens is offering  
Annato and Pomegranate seeds. If you are  
interested send, \$1.00 per packet and an  
SASE to: Bob Jurgens, 116-32 227th St.,  
Cambria Heights, NY 11411. Checks should  
be made payable to the Rare Pit and Plant  
Council.



## NOTES IN PASSING

Here in the Northeast and in the Mid-Atlantic states, we are buried in snow. People are beginning to complain about the harshness of the winter. There are some positive aspects about snow and winter in general.

Snow is the best mulch going. A bit hard to purchase or transport - but no other substance keeps the soil at an even temperature. Plants buried beneath the snow are quietly sleeping at 28-32°.

And for our house plants - December 22 is the first day of spring. The days begin to lengthen and the sun begins to strengthen. By mid-January new growth will appear and

it will be time to resume fertilizing.

And for the gardener - a snowy winter is an ideal time to curl up with all the spring catalogs and dream of spring.

**Mailing labels.** Once again we are having trouble with our labels. Last month ten newsletters were returned "Needs address". The post office machines are ripping or melting them off. When they are returned, we have no idea who didn't get a letter. If you have not received Vol. 19 #1 drop us a line at the address below and we will send you one. Thanks for your patience.

# The Rare Pit & Plant Council

17 Circuit Ave. Scituate, MA 02066

## WINTER FRUITS

Persimmon - *Diospyros khaki*

Pomegranate - *Punica granatum*

The supermarkets have been laden with these cheerful red fruits throughout the holiday season. Unfortunately most will end up in colorful Christmas decorations, only to be tossed out with the trees and wreaths. Both, however, can add an exotic flavor to the holiday table and can be grown on to be interesting and quite lovely plants.

These two fruits have much in common. Both are from the Orient, deciduous plants, hardy to zone 7b, and have been cultivated since the dawn of man.

Persimmon: How anyone discovered these fruits were edible is a mystery lost in time. The unripe fruit is so astringent it puckers your mouth and gullet for several

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A trick for ripening hard supermarket specimens is to put them in the freezer for 24 hours - when you take them out, the flesh is soft, translucent and sweet.

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hours after ingestion and the ripened fruit is so squishy it seems rotten and unappetizing. Persimmons are seasonal, ripening in the late fall frequently after the first snow or frost. Probably some lone hunter out in the woods was starving and ate one in desperation and found it delicious.

*Diospyros khaki* (*Japanese persimmon*) is the persimmon of commerce. The fruits are orange - deep red, ovate, 2-3" long and 2-3" wide. They are available from October to February.

The trees have a lovely sculpted shape and the foliage forms a dense rounded crown. The dark green, ovate leaves are alternate, deeply veined and 3-5" long. In the fall they turn vivid shades of red and orange. After the leaves have fallen, the

bright red fruits hang from the bare branches like Christmas balls.

Persimmons have interest throughout the seasons and are lovely small trees in the landscape.



Persimmons are dioecious and it is necessary to have both male and female plants to get fruit. The whitish flowers are borne in the late spring on the new wood growth.

For those of us in the north, persimmons can be grown in tubs. Keep them outdoors in the spring, summer and fall. Winter them over in a cool room such as a breezeway, sun porch or garage.

**Propagation**: The most difficult aspect of propagating persimmons from seed is finding the seed. Japanese persimmons are hybrids and frequently seedless. If the fruit is really ripe you can sometimes see the seed through the flesh. The seeds are located in the distal tip of the fruit. They are shiny black, ovate and about 1/2" long. These must be cleaned and *stratified* for 2 months in the refrigerator. Hardy and some half-hardy seeds need a cold period to break their dormancy.

**Method 1**. Fill a small container such as a cottage cheese dish with barely moistened peat. Place the seeds in the peat, making sure they are covered by the peat. Cover the container to insure moisture. When the seeds have been stratified, pot them up in individual pots or flats filled with a sterile potting medium.

**Method 2**. Fill an ice cube tray with water and freeze the seeds in individual cubes.

After the seeds have been stratified, simply sow the ice cube in a pot filled with sterile potting medium. This method is really neat, but once when I was stratifying *Lewisia* seeds, we accidentally drank them.

**Related species:** The common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) and the date plum (*D. lotus*) are hardier than the Japanese persimmon, but their fruits are much smaller, about the size of a grape. They are stately 20-30' trees with graceful rounded crowns. They can be grown from stratified seed.

The chocolate pudding tree (*D. dygna* or *ebanaster*) is a tropical persimmon that has bright green fruits the size and shape of the Japanese persimmon. The ripe flesh is deep brown and has the texture of axle grease - the flavor has a slight hint of chocolate. The timber from this tree is one of the sources of ebony.

## POMEGRANATE

*Punica granatum*



The round, leathery, red fruits of the pomegranate are a herald of the holiday season. They make colorful additions to garlands, wreaths. Eating them, however is a challenge. Inside the leathery hide there are hundreds of 1/10" white seeds encased in a sweet fleshy red aril. Our friend, Marilyn Shapiro's Yiddish grandmother had a wonderful phrase to describe eating a pomegranate, "Keye shpeye." Chew and spit.

Pomegranates are large bushy 15 -20' shrubs that can be pruned to a tree form or allowed to spread. They put on a spectacular display in late spring with hundreds of deep red tubular flowers. (Some

cultivars have white, orange or pink flowers). These are followed in the fall by the large red fruits. The dark green leaves are whorled, 1-3" long and ovate and form a dense rounded shrub. In the fall the leaves turn a pale yellow-green. The bright red fruits remain on the shrub long after the leaves have fallen. Pomegranates are elegant plants for a mixed border or grown as individual specimens. They are hardy as far north as Washington DC. We have two miserable specimens struggling for life in the gardens of St. Luke in the Fields in NY City. They have been there for 10 years, neither flowering or fruiting.

For those of us growing them in the north, pomegranates can be grown in tubs on a patio or terrace during spring, summer and fall and wintered indoors in a cool room. Park Seed sells the seeds for *Punica granatum* "Nana". These dwarf shrubs can be grown and flowered under lights in ordinary home growing conditions. They flower 18 months from seed. The fruit is not edible, but the plant is exquisite.

The beauty of the flower and the fruit of the pomegranates has fascinated man since the dawn of time. References to pomegranates can be found in religious and dramatic literature.

King Solomon says to his love; "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, your mouth is lovely, and your cheeks are like the halves of a pomegranate" The robes of ancient Hebrew priests were decorated with golden balls in the shape of pomegranates.

We even find the pomegranate in Shakespeare when Romeo says to Juliet: "Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree. Believe me love, it was a nightingale".

Our favorite tale is from Greek mythology. Hades kidnaped Persephone, the Goddess of Agriculture, and brought her to the underworld. Her father, Demeter, was enraged and pleaded with Hades for her

return to the upper world. He was only partially successful. It seems while in Hades, Peresophne ate 6 pomegranate seeds. This deed doomed her to spend six months of ever year in the underworld and only six in the world of sunshine. Thanks to her, we have six months of winter!! (By the feel of the passed November and December, we suspect she's noshed on some more!!)

Bacchus, the God of grape and debauchery, really pulled a fast one. He fell madly in love with a nymph of good virtue. The young lady had dreams of wearing a crown and was saving herself for a man who would crown her a queen. Bacchus promised, she yielded, but the rat turned her into a pomegranate and the crown the poor nymph wears, is the calyx of the fruit.

Mahomet is a little more positive and enjoins us all: "Eat the pomegranate for it purges the system of hate and envy."

Any fruit with all those seeds has to be a symbol of fertility. To this day Sephardic Jews put bowls of scented pomegranates on their table at Rosh Hashanah. If they are rich in seeds, this is taken to mean that the members of the family will be blessed with many children.

The Moors when they invaded Spain, made Grenada their capitol. They lined the streets with Pomegranate trees. They also probably invented Grenadine, pomegranate syrup. See below.

The Spanish conquistadors brought the pomegranate to America where it escaped cultivation on both the East and West Coast. It was found growing wild in California in 1763 and growing wild in

Georgia in 1773.

The modern day opinion is best expressed by Joan M. Junglesch. "We agree with those who think there are easier things to eat and enjoy. However, in fruit and flower arrangements they make an interesting and attractive addition."

**Note:** If you use a pomegranate in an arrangement, don't throw it out when the other flowers and greens fade. They dry naturally and can be used year after year.

We do not entirely agree with this opinion. Our grenadine is delicious and we can't wait to glaze some pears with it. (15 pomegranates made 12 pints of grenadine) We will agree, that extracting the juice and eating the fruit is a bit messy!

Pomegranates are a breeze to grow. The seeds should be cleaned of the red aril, they can either be sown directly into flats or individual pots filled with a moist sterile medium or they can be stored in an air-tight jar and planted at a later date. Just make sure there is some soil near you when you, "keye speye".

Acknowledgements: Food by Waverley Root and Plants of the Bible, Michael Zohary.

I give you permission  
To eat a persimmon -  
Unfrozen it's tart  
Frozen it's nart.

### Persimmon Dip

1 Cup persimmon pulp	1 Package cream cheese
2/3 Cup of orange juice,	2 tsp. Lemon juice
2 tsp. honey	2 pinches of sa

Cream the cheese using an electric mixer, add orange & lemon juice, honey and salt. Beat in the persimmon pulp until the mixture is creamy. Serve with cocktail crackers. No one will guess the base and IT'S DELICIOUS ! Jim Fryer

## Sources for Persimmons & Pomegranates

And other Unusual Fruits

Camellia Forest Nursery  
Box 291  
Chapel Hill  
NC 27516  
800-669-2067  
\$2.00

Chestnut Hill Nursery  
Rt. 1 Box 341  
Alachua FL 32615  
904-462-2820 or

Edible Landscaping  
PO Box 77  
Afton  
VA 22920

Forest Farm  
990 Tetherow Rd.  
Williams  
OR 97544-9599  
503-846-6963  
\$3.00

Greer Gardens  
1280 Goodpasture Island Rd.  
Eugene  
OR 97401-1794  
503-686-8266 686-0919  
\$3.00

Gossler Farms Nursery  
1200 Weaver Rd  
Springfield  
OR 97478-9663  
503-746-3922 or 747-0749

Raintree Nursery  
391 Butts Rd  
Morton  
WA 98356

Woodlanders, Inc  
1128 Colleton Ave  
Aiken  
SC 29801  
803-648-7522

## Pomegranate Syrup

Pomegranates

Sugar

Skin several pomegranates. Put the seeds and pulp in a pan with an equal amount of sugar. Let stand for 24 hours. The next day, bring the mixture to a rolling boil for 5-7 minutes (No water is required) Strain the mixture through a sieve gently, pressing with a spoon. (If you bruise the seeds you may get a bitter taste.) Discard the pulp and seeds, then bring the mixture back to a boil for 1 minute. Pour into sterilized jars and seal.

This syrup has a lovely deep red color and makes a festive gift. Use it to glaze pears, pour over sherbet, sorbets or ice cream. It can also be used as grenadine in whiskey sours, Tom Collins, etc.

## WHAT'S IN THE MARKET & WHEN

### January

Arrowroot, Cherimoya, Carob, Date, Feijoa, Fig, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Longan, Malanga, Mango, Olive, Pomegranate, Persimmon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Tamarillo, Taro, and Water Chestnut.

### February

Arrowroot, Black olive, Black sapote, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Date, Feijoa, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Macadamia, Mango, Papaya, Passion fruit, Persimmon, Pomegranate, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), and Tamarillo.

### March

Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Date, Guava, Horned melon, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Macadamia, Mango, Papaya, Passion fruit, Persimmon, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Tamarillo, and Water chestnuts.

### April

Cherimoya, Chickpea, Date, Feijoa, Guava, Kumquat, Loquats, Macadamia, Mango, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Tamarillo, and Tomatillo. And don't forget all those wonderful tubers that are sprouting now - Taro, Malanga, and Name!

### May

Bitter melon, Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Bitter melon, Feijoa, Guava, Husk tomato, Horned Melon, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Macadamia, Malanga, Mango, Name, Pepino melon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Tamarillo, Taro, Tomatillo, and Water Chestnuts.

### June

Bitter melon, Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Feijoa, Guava, Horned melon, Litchie, Longan, Loquat, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Malanga, Mango, Mangosteen, Name, Passion fruit, Rambutan, Tamarillo, Tomatillo, Taro, and Water chestnuts.

### July

Atemoya, Bitter melon, Carambola, Canistel, Cherimoya, Kumquat, Litchie, Longan, Lemon grass, Malanga, Mango, **Mangosteen**, Name, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear (pads & fruit) **Rambutan**, Spanish pineapple, (spiny narrower redish leaves), Tamarillo, Taro, Tomatillo, Water chestnuts.

### August

Atemoya, Bitter melon, Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Bitter melon, Durian, Feijoa, Kumquat, Guava, Key Limes, Lemon grass, Litchie, Longan, Loquat, Macadamia, Malanga, Mango, **Mangosteen**, Name, Pepino melon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Spanish Pineapple, Tamarillo (orange and red varieties), Tamarind, Taro, and Water Chestnuts, and White Sapote.

### September

Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Bitter melon, Durian, Feijoa, Guava, Litchie, Longan, Loquat, Key Limes, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Macadamia, Malanga, Mango, **Mangosteen**, Monstera, Name, Olives, Pepino melon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Persimmon, Pitaya, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Tamarind, Tamarillo (orange and red varieties) Taro, Ugly fruit, and Waternuts, and White Sapote.

**October**

Antemoya, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Bitter melon, Black sapote, fresh Date, Guava, Horned melon, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Loquat, Mango, Monstera, Olive, Papaya, Passion fruit, Persimmon, Pomegranate, Prickly pear fruit and pads, Rosemary sprigs, Tamarillo, Tamarind, Tomatillo, Ugly fruit, Waternuts and White sapote.

**November**

Antemoya, Bitter melon, Black sapote, Carmabola, Cherimoya, Cippolini, fresh Dates, Feijoa, fresh imported Figs, Guava, Horned melon, Kumquat, Loquat, Mango, Olive, Papaya, Persimmon, Pomegrante, Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Sugar cane, Tamarillo, Ugly fruit, White sapote. All manner of citrus.

**December**

Black sapote, Canistel, Carambola, Cherimoya, Cippolini, cured Dates, Feijoa, fresh imported Figs, Guava, Horned melon, Kumquat, Mango, Persimmon, Pomegranate, Passion fruit, Sugar cane, Tamarillo All manner of Citrus.

This calendar is not cast in stone. It is taken from my monthly travels around the ethnic markets of New York and supermarkets of Cohasset MA. New things, such as pitaya, keep coming on the market at unpredictable times. Loquats used to be available only in June & July - now they crop up all year round.

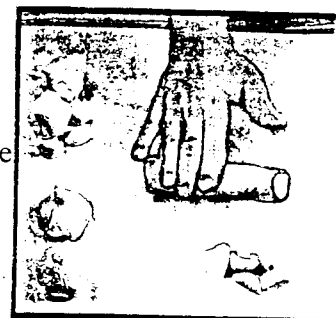
**E-z rol garlic peeler**

Every year we search out catalogs, magazines, stores and our imagination for an unusual gift, preferably of the "stocking stuffer" variety. This year we found one of the choicest items ever. The e-z rol garlic peeler. We use a lot of garlic in this house and peeling it has been one of the trifling chores we could do without. E-z rol is so much fun, we have voluntarily peeled cloves and cloves of garlic - all our guests have played with it and added to our collection of peeled cloves. The peeler comes packed in a long plastic tube that is excellent for storing all the extra cloves.

E-z rol looks like a large cannelloni and is made of a flexible, dishwasher proof substance. To use it, insert an unpeeled clove in the hollow, roll the tube gently until

you hear a crackle - and Voila! a peeled clove rolls out.

This year I used them as napkin rings (party favor) at a small New Years Eve party. They were the hit of the night. Each guest was also given a clove of garlic. No vampires at our party. They cost \$7.95 payable to the Omessi Group Ltd. 11710 Doral Avenue, Northridge, CA 91326. Or 818-831-0748.



## SEEDS

### **Seeds that need to be knicked and soaked**

1. Carob - soak almost a day
2. Tamarind - until the skin begins to crinkle. sometimes as soon as 2 hrs.

### **Seeds for the sphagnum bag.**

1. Almost any seed that is 1 inch or more diameter or length
2. Avocado
3. Cherimoya and other anonas
4. Egg fruit or canistel
5. Loquat
6. Mango
7. White sapote.

### **Tubers for the sphagnum bag.**

1. Ginger and galangala
2. Malanga
3. Name
4. Taro

### **Seeds that can be cleaned and stored.**

1. Bixa
2. Feijoa
3. Fig - not too long
4. Guava
5. Member of the casti. pitaya. prickley pear
6. Papaya
7. Pomegranate
8. Tamarillo
9. Tamarind
10. Tomatillo

### **Seeds with a short vitality.**

1. Canistel or Egg fruit
2. Cherimoya
3. Coffee
4. Loquat
5. Mango
6. White, and black sapote
7. Shelled fresh peanuts They will keep for several months in the husk.

### **Seeds that need to be stratified.**

All fruits hardy to zone 6b or 7a or less should be stratified. Stratify the seeds for 6-8 weeks in moist sphagnum in the fridge or in an ice cube tray.

1. Kiwi (*Actinidia deliciosa*) Perfectly hardy in NYC and with protection in 6. The hardy variety, (*Actinidia arguta*) produces delicious fruits and is a lovely vigorous vine.
2. Persimmons
3. Pawpaws (not to be confused with papaya) *Asimia triloba* A beautiful tree in the landscape and the only hardy annona. You need two for cross pollination.



4. Chinese red dates (*Zizyphus jujuba*) Another stunning under utilized tree that is hardy to zone 5b.
5. Chestnuts (Lovely deciduous trees that are not quite hardy - Put them in a cool place such as a garage for the winter.

**Seeds from herbs:**

1. All members of the Umbellifera. dill. caraway, anise, celery, fennel etc.
2. Fennugreek - makes a charming tiny bean plant.
3. Sesame seeds if not processed (look in health food stores)
4. Mustard seeds. These form a gel when soaked in water and can be used to make Chia pets.
5. Poppy seeds.
6. Just for fun try growing mixed herbs eg. Pickling spices, bird seed.

**Herbs that won't grow:**

1. Pepper
2. Allspice
3. Vanilla

**Review of Periodical**

**Green Prints, "The Weeders Digest"**,  
\$ 4.50, \$ 17.97 per year (\$ 21.00 U.S. in  
Canada)

This pretty journal is not really a garden book. It doesn't tell much about how to garden but it is very much about gardening and gardeners. The winter issue of this quarterly has 87 pages, 52 of which are devoted to short stories, poems and reminiscences. Some are quite funny. Your reviewer especially enjoyed a review of aluminum Christmas trees classified as members of the family aluminacea, common name Alcoa fir. The illustrations which are numerous are outstanding and include ones

by the notable horticulturalist, Peter Loewer. The print quality and layout are excellent. By the way the number of tasteful ads is not a problem. They are fun to read.

This time of year outdoor gardeners in the north are rattling around the house or drooling over seed catalogues planning to order ten times too much seed for their plot or stamina. We've all forgotten the bad back and dilemma of what to do with all those zucchini. This small journal may be just the thing to get you through to planting time.

If you are interested the magazine can be ordered from Green Prints, P.O. Box 1355, Fairview, N.C. 28730.

John Hart



**The 1996 New York Flower Show**

March 8-17, 1996

**BROADWAY IN BLOOM**

A Salute to New York Theater

The New York Coliseum, Columbus Circle at 59th and Broadway

**PLEASE JOIN US, WE NEED YOU!!**

Once again we are making a special offer to all our subscribers. We will arrange a day pass for those who sit our booth for two hours. The booth is lots of fun, you do not have to be an expert! If you are interested, call Doug Hawley at: 212- 925-7457.

We urge all of you within reasonable traveling distance, to come to the New York Show. It is NOT a mob scene. Not only can you see the exhibits up close, you can frequently chat with the exhibitors and ask questions.

