

Considerations for Planning a Pomegranate Orchard:

CULTIVAR SELECTION



Dr. Bill Castle
UF/IFAS/CREC
bcastle@ufl.edu
863.956.1151 x8670

(The point of view expressed herein is that of the author. It is tempered by the caveats presented below. Please read the entire document.)

Suggested Enterprises

IF you wish to start a commercial pomegranate planting, please be aware that insufficient data and information are available to support **planting more than 1-2 acres** without **some risk**.

When planting about 10 x 18 ft or 242 plants/acre, a trial planting of 1-2 acres would be an opportunity to test 4-8 cultivars with about 60 plants of each cultivar, or on one acre, a combination of a few cultivars accompanied by a small collection of cultivars for further evaluation could be planted.

Cultivars

Certain traits that have been measured or observed for cultivars under evaluation in Florida are presented in Table 1. The cultivars appearing in the table are those deemed most interesting, if not promising, based primarily on data from Water Conserv II. However, note the following:

1. A great deal more is not known than is known about poms in Florida so far.
2. The results of field evaluations obtained to date may change with time.
3. The taste data and other data are only for fruit sampled at Water Conserv II in late August. Examinations of fruit remaining on the plants until October illustrated the potential for better color.
4. The taste test results are useful for making decisions, but do not necessarily represent the outcomes if fruit had been harvested later in the season.
5. There exists the generalization that among cultivars as seed [aril] color increases, seed hardness increases and cold tolerance increases.
6. The soft-seeded cultivars listed in Table 1 are cold hardy enough to withstand Central Florida winters and perhaps up to North Central Florida.
7. It may be possible to select among the cultivars in Table 1 in order to establish a season with cultivars that mature at different times. So far, the fruit of the cultivars at Water Conserv II seem to mature in late August through September.
8. It appears that **the main problem to be encountered with a commercial pomegranate enterprise in Florida is a species of the fungus, *Botryosphaeria***. It is not presently known if there are differences among cultivars in their response to this fungus!
9. To start a commercial planting, propagation contracts would need to be directly arranged with a nursery as adequate plants are not presently available.

Table 1. Certain traits of various pomegranate cultivars under evaluation in Florida.

| Selection | Russian no.^a | Yield^b | Taste panel^c | Seed^d | Color^e |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sakerdze | R5 | 45 | 38 | H | Lt. pink |
| Afganski | R26 | 40 | 47 | H | Light |
| Surh-anor | R33 | 37 | 10 | S-H | Cream |
| Salavataski | R8 | 47 | 78 | H | Pink |
| Angel Red ^f | | 37 | 75 | S | Cream |
| Azadi | | 23 | 51 | S | Cream |
| Grenada | | 25 | 33 | S | Cream |
| Kunduzski | R24 | 25 | 11 | M | |
| Desertnyi | | 22 | 33 | S | Red |
| Medovyi Vahsha | | 15 | 68 | S | Pink |
| Sin Pepe | | 12 | 75 | S | Cream |

^a See the website button <Southeast U. S. Cultivars> for a complete list of Russian selections.

^b No. fruit/plant. Measured when the plants were 2 years old.

^c Percentage of favorable taste responses to fruit harvested on August 30, 2011 when the plants were 2 years old. See the <Water Conserv II> website button for additional details.

^d S=soft hardness; M=medium; H=hard.

^e Peel color and seed color are not necessarily the same. The color listed is primarily for the seed [aril] color. Furthermore, the colors of both parts of the fruit are as they were on August 30, 2011.

^f **Angel Red is a patented cultivar.** Planting it requires an agreement from the owner.