

Cultivating pomegranate for prosperity

Pomegranate has ability to withstand harsh climate and tolerate heat, drought and moisture deficit. The area under pomegranate cultivation in hot arid region is increasing at faster rate owing to its high demand, hardy nature, low maintenance cost, high yields and better storage quality. It has vast medicinal, nutritional value and one of the richest sources of antioxidants and also known as 'super food'. It is processed into value added products such as juices, squash, jelly, anardana and mouth freshener. Development of improved varieties, standardization of agro-techniques suiting to arid environments and spread of canal irrigation has led to increase in area of pomegranate particularly in hot arid region of Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Shriganganagar and Hanumangarh districts of Rajasthan.

Pomegranate is certainly most favourable one owing to its adaptability to arid environment, tolerance to abiotic stresses, particularly high and low temperature, salinity and drought. Further availability of irrigation facilities, inexpensive labour and high return per unit area have resulted in incessant increase in area and production of pomegranate in arid region. It has enormous medicinal, nutritional and antioxidants value,

particularly anthocyanin (Table 1). A number of value-added products such as juices, squash, jelly, anardana and mouth freshener are prepared by processing fruit. The juice contains micronutrients (calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, zinc), vitamins (thymine, niacin, ascorbic acid) and antioxidants substances like anthocyanin, phenols and flavonoids. Owing to its immense health benefits, it is sometimes referred as "food medicine".



Pomegranate orchard in flowering