

RESEARCH NEWS

PERFORMANCE OF SOFT-SEEDED VARIETIES OF POMEGRANATE (*Punica granatum* L) IN THE JAFFNA DISTRICT

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Pomegranate (*Punica granatum* L) is grown as a fruit crop in Sri Lanka but annually 280 mt of fruits are imported to the country from Pakistan and India. The crop can be grown successfully over a wide range of soil and climatic conditions, but perform best if planted in areas with warm long dry periods. In Jaffna peninsula, the climate is favorable for pomegranate production and there are abandoned lands in home sheds available for planting pomegranate. In addition there is a good market potential for high quality of fruit juice locally. One of the constraints in developing pomegranate cultivation in this region is the lack of proper varieties suitable for the area. Therefore, a study was conducted to at the Agricultural Research Station at Thirunelvely in the Jaffna district of Sri Lanka to evaluate the adaptability of two soft-seeded pomegranate varieties recommended by the Department of Agriculture namely, *Nimali* and *Daya*, under dry zone condition on red yellow latosols of the Jaffna district, Sri Lanka.

Nursery establishment of the crop was done in January 2003 and field planting in June 2003. Both varieties were planted at a spacing of 3 m x 3 m in three replicates, with 7 plants per replicate. All recommended practices for pomegranate cultivation were adopted. The first harvesting was done in April to May and 2nd harvesting in September to October in 2005. Fruit circumference, weight/fruit, fruit lets color, No. of fruit lets per fruit, seed weight per fruit, total soluble sugar content, the No. of fruits per plant, and fruit yield per plant per year were recorded.

The highest No. of fruits per plant (40) and fruit yield (8kg) were recorded in the variety *Nimali*. The size and weight of fruits were high in the variety *Daya*. There was a slight pinkish color difference observed in the fruitlets of both soft-seeded varieties. No serious pest and diseases observed, however, pod borer attack was controlled by proper management in time. Cloth bag was used to cover the fruit to avoid the pest damage and to get the fruits with high quality.

At present local varieties are only grown in Jaffna peninsula. The two soft-seeded varieties used in the present study have acceptable qualities. The consumer preference is also high than the local varieties due to the soft seeded nature.