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The Archer

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Fruit of the gods thrives through the winter months

By Diana Cormack

As a child I only ate pomegranates in October when my mother bought me one of these exotic fruits for my birthday. I used to picture their journey from far-off lands where other strange plants thrived in the hot sunshine. Never did I envisage them thriving in the snow. It took a visit to a neighbour's garden in Cherry Tree Road this winter to see that!

The pomegranates pictured survived December's snow, or at least most of them did. My neighbour Vijay Saggart told *The Archer* that she had caved in to her granddaughters' request and allowed them to pick the biggest because they wanted to cut it up to see how far it had developed. "The tiny seeds inside were such a beautiful pink colour, fully formed but sour," said Vijay.

Mother's search for abducted daughter

Over the years the pomegranate has become more popular, with its juice and seeds believed to provide particular benefits. But the oldest belief about the fruit goes way back to when people thought it played a part in the Earth's seasonal changes.

When the goddess Ceres was in charge of nature, she made sure things grew and ripened continually so there was always plenty of food. Unfortunately Pluto, the god of the underworld, kidnapped her beautiful daughter Persephone and took her to live in his dark kingdom. Her friends, who saw the



Cold harvest: Pomegranates growing happily in Cherry Tree Road, N2

kidnapping, told Ceres. Heart-broken, she determined to search

for her daughter, neglecting her duties to the Earth. Eventually the people, facing starvation, asked Jupiter, Father of the Gods, for help. He decreed that Pluto should set Persephone free if she had tasted no food in the underworld. But, on that very day, she had eaten six pomegranate seeds which Pluto had given her.

Why we have four seasons

Jupiter declared that Persephone should spend a month in Hades for each seed she had eaten and be free for the other six. So Ceres' delight at her daughter's return is reflected in the spring and summer seasons, whilst autumn and winter match her sadness at Persephone's departure.

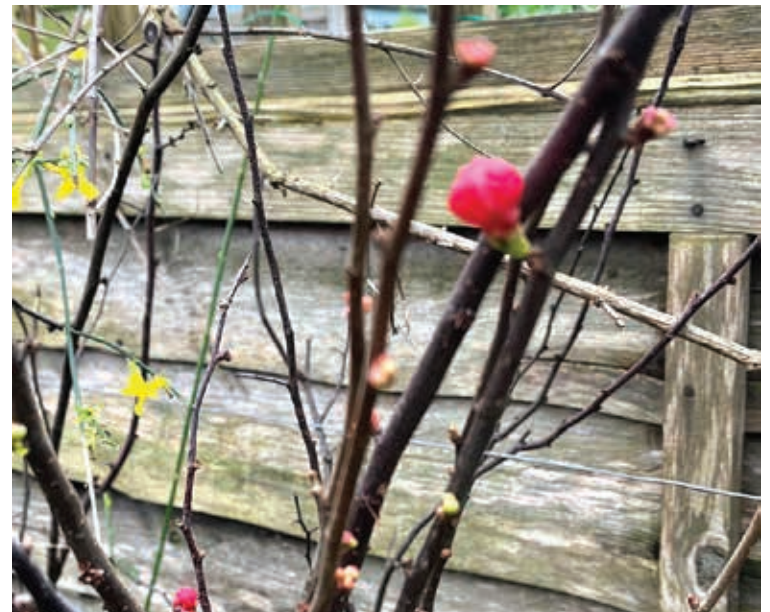
Nowadays, pomegranates are commercially available most of the year round, being harvested in the northern hemisphere from September to February and in the southern hemisphere from March to May.

Please let *The Archer* know if you have any unusual plants growing in your house, garden or allotment, accompanied by a picture if possible. Email us: news@the-archer.co.uk

Early bloomers on show already

By Ruth Anders

East Finchley gardeners may have noticed the unusually early appearance of buds and blossoms on various shrubs and perennials. Once our December cold spell was out of the way, the relatively mild end to 2022 and start to 2023 may have encouraged some plants to think that spring was approaching. Here are photos of some we have seen that are flowering and budding now. In normal conditions, they would wait until March or later. We'd love to hear from you if you have other examples. Email us: news@the-archer.co.uk



Darling buds: Plants already showing their spring colours in January include, from top to bottom, the cheerful pink Bergenia, the creamy white Exochorda and the bold red Chaenomeles, with yellow Forsythia in the background. Photos Ruth Anders

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