



Musa spp. Banana¹

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INTRODUCTION

Large, fleshy, upright stalks topped with soft, smooth, arching leaves signifies the Banana plant (Fig. 1). Ranging from six feet for the dwarf species to over 30 feet for the largest types, Banana trees are guaranteed to lend a tropical flavor to any landscape setting. The broad, tender leaves are easily torn by winds and plants should be located in a sheltered area to prevent this. The easily-grown Banana tree is ideal for planters near the pool, located around garden ponds, or clustered together for an exotic effect. The unusual reddish-purple flowers are followed by clusters of upwardly-pointing green fruit, maturing to a beautiful yellow.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Musa spp.*

Pronunciation: MEW-suh species

Common name(s): Banana

Family: *Musaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; fruit tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 30 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: palm; upright



Figure 1. Young Banana.

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire; undulate

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: >36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange; purple

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches; 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: green; yellow

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: No entries found.

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

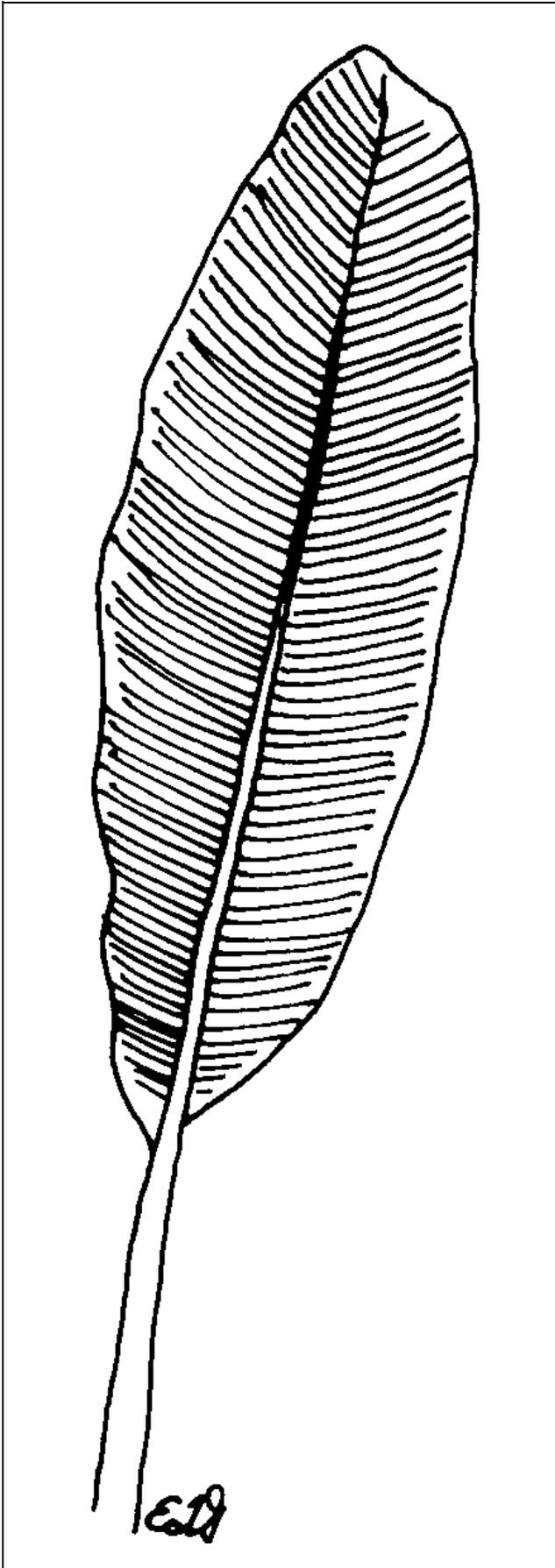


Figure 3. Foliage of Banana.

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Growing best on fertile, moist soil, Bananas will thrive in full sun or partial shade and should be protected from both wind and cold. Plants respond well to regular fertilization. Too many suckers should not be allowed to develop since this will decrease the ability of any one plant to produce a good bunch of fruit. By allowing suckers to develop only at periodic intervals, a succession of fruiting can be obtained. Banana bunches should be harvested when the fruit is still green and allowed to ripen in a cool, dark place. It produces fruit in USDA hardiness zones 8b and 9 only when winter temperatures stay above freezing. Plants killed to the ground which sprout from the soil in the spring will not produce fruit until the following year.

Many different species of Banana are available. Some ornamental types are grown for foliage or flowers. *Musa coccinea* has brilliant red bracts, while *Musa rosea* has pink bracts. Both hold up very well as cut flowers. *Musa acuminata*, 'Dwarf Cavendish', is one of the best fruit cultivars. It has large bunches with large fruit and the plant's small size makes it easier to protect from wind. The tall-growing 'Ladyfinger' has small bunches of small Bananas but they are very thin-skinned and delicious. *Musa velutina* grows three to four feet tall with three-foot leaves that are green above and bronzy beneath. The upright pink bracts has orange flowers and yield velvety pink fruit.

Propagation is by division of the suckers.

Pests

Scales and nematodes are of its two common pests.

Diseases

Sigatoka leaf-spot, Cercospora leaf-spot, and Panama disease may infect this tree.