



## *Musa spp.* Banana<sup>1</sup>

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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

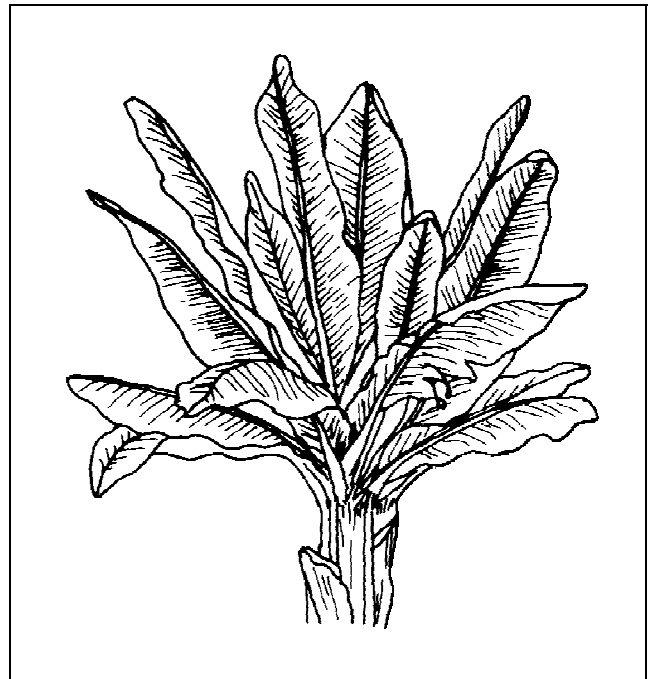


Figure 1. Young Banana.

**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

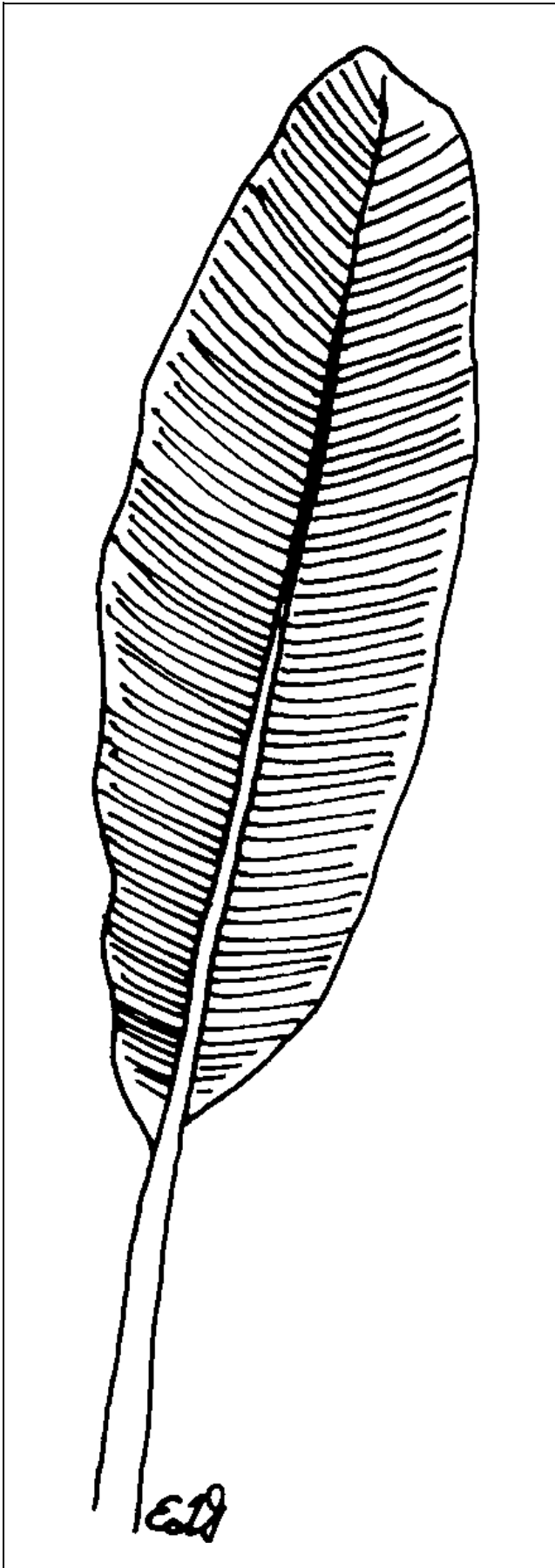


Figure 3. Foliage of Banana.

**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.