

Banana



Banana Overview

- Tropical herbaceous plant consisting of underground corm and a trunk comprised of concentric layers of leaf sheaths
- At 10 to 15 months, its true stem rapidly grows through the center and emerges as a terminal inflorescence which bears fruit

Banana Overview

- Flowers appear in groups (hands) along the stem which are covered by purplish bracts
- First hands to appear contain female flowers
- Number of hands of female flowers can vary from a few to more than 10
- Afterwards, numerous sterile flowers appear followed by numerous hands of male flowers

Bananas - Climate

- Tropical plant – grows best in warm conditions
- Frost will kill leaves
- Temperatures in the high 20s will kill the plant
- Lower Rio Grande Valley is best area in Texas to grow bananas
- Where banana is grown for ornamental purposes, new plants are obtained and planted each spring

Bananas – Soil and Site Selection

- Grow in wide variety of soil
- Soil needs to be deep and has good drainage
- Select site what offers protection from wind and cold weather
- Warmest location in the home landscape is near the south or southeast side of the house

Bananas - Varieties

- Numerous named and unnamed varieties
- Ornamental use
 - Dwarf Cavendish – reaches 6 feet high
 - Other ornamental varieties can be found in nursery trade

Bananas - Varieties

- Fruit Production
 - Orinoco – coarse-looking fruit about 6 inches long by 2 inches in diameter mainly used in cooking
 - Dwarf Cavendish – short, compact variety
 - Lady Finger – thin skinned fruit about 1 inch in diameter and 4 inches long; superior flavor
 - Apple – similar to Lady Finger except has an apple aftertaste
- Plantains are cooking bananas, not available in south Texas

Bananas – Propagation & Planting

- Suckers are used for propagation
- Sucker should be carefully removed from the side of the mother rhizome
- Transplant sucker at the same depth it was originally growing
- Ornamental planting – plant 2 to 3 feet apart
- Commercial planting – space 8 to 10 feet apart

Bananas - Culture

- Eliminate weed and grass competition
- Irrigate periodically, avoid standing water
- Fertilize with 21-0-0 fertilizer when planting continue monthly for first 3-4 months
- Protect from cold if possible
- Prune suckers for propagation
- After fruiting, cut mother plant off at ground level – will never produce again

Bananas – Production, Maturity, Use

- Most will produce flower bud within 10-15 months
- Most production north of the Lower Rio Grande Valley occurs in spring and summer following a particularly mild winter
- Most plants in Texas commercial production will produce 35-40 pounds of fruit (2-3 hands)
- Cut entire stem off when individual bananas are plump and rounded and allow to ripen

Bananas – Diseases & Insect Pests

- Few problems have been documented in south Texas
- Unidentified fungal leaf spot has been observed, but no serious damage resulted
- Leaf tattering by wind is the most common problem