**Introduction**

Large, fleshy, upright stalks topped with soft, smooth, arching leaves signifies the banana plant. 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
- **Invasive potential:** little invasive potential
- **Uses:** fruit; specimen; container or planter

**Description**

- **Height:** 10 to 30 feet
- **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular
- **Crown shape:** upright/erect, palm

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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
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower
Flower color: purple, orange
Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: elongated
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches, 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: yellow, green
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches don’t droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: not applicable
Current year twig thickness:
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: full sun, partial sun, or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained; extended flooding
Drought tolerance: little
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other
Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

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 acuminate,* ‘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.