

Banana Farm™



Planting and Identifying your Plants



Now you can grow your own banana plants from seed. The Banana Farm comes complete with everything you need to create your own island scene, complete with a monkey and Banana Tree seeds. Complete growing instructions and care information is included.

The banana is actually not a tree, but the world's largest herb. Upon sprouting, the banana plant will grow an amazing foot in about one month. Bananas have flowers with an unpleasant smell and are usually pollinated by bats. They make fantastic container plants to grow outdoors in the summer and inside in the winter.

Bananas have been cultivated for thousands of years. Although there are more than 300 species of banana, only 20 are commercially cultivated. A majority of the bananas produced around the world are the plantain or cooking variety. Native to Southeast Asia, bananas are now found in most tropical and subtropical areas. The Latin name of the banana plant, *Musa*, is in honor of the Roman Emperor Musa who first exported bananas around the world after tasting one. There are many historic references to bananas—they are mentioned in Hindu, Chinese, Greek, and Roman texts.

Contents

- Bag of yellow gravel
- Plastic monkey
- Pack of Banana Tree seeds
- Planting greenhouse
- Planting mixture
- Instruction and information booklet

Planting Your Banana Farm

Note: Don't plant all the seeds at once. Plant what you need, and save the rest in case you need to replant; enough seeds are included to replant at least one time.

1. Massage the bag of soil to remove any clumps.
2. Cut open the bag and pour the soil into the greenhouse base.
3. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water, and let it absorb.
4. Mix water and planting mixture thoroughly with a spoon.
5. Add another $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and smooth the surface.
6. To lay stone or sand, first press down firmly on the moist soil to make a depression, then fill with the sand or gravel.
7. Once your paths, beaches, and ponds are laid, you can plant the seed.
8. Push seeds about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch into the mixture and bury them
9. Put the top on your planted greenhouse and place it in a windowsill or very near a window. An eastern exposure is best.
10. Seeds will germinate in 3 to 8 weeks
11. You will have to remove the top and keep well watered as the seeds will grow extremely quickly.
12. Continue to transplant your bananas into increasingly larger pots until the final pots are at least 12" across.
13. In about nine months under optimal conditions outside, the plants reach their mature height of about 8 to 15 feet.

Caring for your Banana Farm

Watering

- If you overwater the terrarium, tip it gently to pour out the extra water, leave the top off, and place it in an area with a southern exposure until desired moisture level is reached.
- Your growing mixture is inert and contains no fertilizer. You may fertilize your terrarium in the spring and summer with a water-soluble houseplant food or time-release pellets.
- Fertilize your bananas every two weeks during the spring and summer for maximum growth
- Your bananas will grow without the lid for the most part, and it is important to keep them moist so they do not dry out.

Location

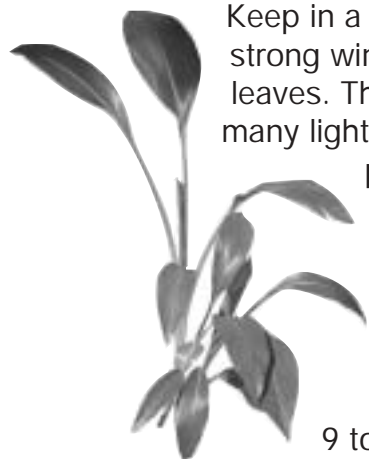
- The best location for your terrarium is on a windowsill with a western or southern exposure. Be sure the window is not drafty.
- Your plants thrive in direct, hot afternoon sun.
- Your plants will naturally reach toward the light, so rotate your greenhouse every week. If they are stretching too much, they may need more light.
- Do not place your terrarium close to a heating or cooling vent.
- Do not let your bananas freeze, and keep them out of drafty locations.
- Do not place your terrarium outside in the hot sun. The temperature inside the terrarium will rise to levels that are not safe for the plants. You may place it outdoors in the shade and when it is below 80 degrees (26° Celsius).
- Once you remove the lid, your banana will enjoy being out in the sun. Be sure to put it in a location that is not breezy, as wind will shred the leaves.
- A common problem with terrariums is that they are easily knocked over. Keep this in mind as you choose the location for your windowsill greenhouse.

Other Notes

- If mold forms, remove it with a twig or water the greenhouse with a 1:50 mix of hydrogen peroxide to water.
- If you remove the top to allow the plants to grow larger, be sure to check the moisture level every few days.
- You can trim your plants back. It is important to cut them above a set of leaves and to water afterward, as pruning can be a shock to some plants.
- It is okay to let the plants bloom, but keep the plants from going dormant by trimming off any seed pods before seeds form.
- You can transplant your plants into other containers. Be sure to water first, and remove as big of a ball of soil around the roots as you can. To replant, make sure the soil in the new container is moist, place the soil ball into a pre-dug hole, and water thoroughly.
- Little plants, called suckers, sent up from the base of the mother plant can be removed to start a new banana tree.
- Bananas also multiply by forming underground rhizomes (thick roots), that form new plants. Each plant will produce one flower cluster and fruit.
- Your banana plants may begin to die in the winter. This is normal, and they will re-grow in the spring.

Information on how your bananas produce fruit

Banana plants require full sun and lots of water in order to bear fruit. They should be outdoors as much as possible, but not permitted to freeze.



Keep in a sheltered location as strong winds can shred their leaves. The plants will grow in many light conditions but will not

produce fruit unless they have plenty of light.

Your banana plants will form flower stalks 2 to 5 years after sprouting.

The main stalk can take 9 to 18 months to grow, and bananas take another 4 to 8

months to mature. The main flower stalk can be as large as 12 inches thick. To encourage fruiting, be sure to remove or transplant the suckers that grow around the base of the plant. Fertilizers rich in potassium can speed up the fruiting process as well. Banana plants are self-fruitful and do not need a pollinator. After fruiting, the main stalk dies back and produces new growth for the next generation of fruit.

The bananas will grow upside down. Their stems are connected to the bunch at the bottom with the ends pointing upwards. This is called negative geotropism. The flower stalks will form thick stems with their leaves to support the growing "hand" of fruit.

Terrariums - General Information, History, How They Work

General Information

Terrariums, a favorite since the 1800s, continue to enjoy popularity today. Creating a terrarium is easy, fun, and inexpensive. Care is minimal and they can go for months without water under proper conditions. Also, a wide variety of plants can be grown that would normally fail in the dry, drafty environment of the average home. Avid gardeners celebrate terrariums as a way to extend their gardening season all year long.

History

Terrariums are miniature, self-contained ecosystems. Once created, these closed environments can go for months unattended without even the addition of water. The history of terrariums is rooted in the Victorian Age where they were used in parlors to house delicate and exotic plants.

The invention of the terrarium is credited to Dr. Nathaniel Ward, a London physician who discovered it by accident. While experimenting with cocoons in covered jars, he found tiny plants growing and thriving in the soil of the jars, even as plants in his backyard were dying from polluted air. Next, he successfully experimented with growing ferns in covered containers. The result: the first terrariums, then known as "Wardian cases." These were large, enclosed containers used for growing delicate plants in the home or transporting plants over long distances. The terrariums used most often today are small, ornamental versions of the Wardian case.

How They Work

Terrariums are a self-contained environment. Once planted, they need nothing from the outside except a little indirect sunlight; they can even go without water for a long period of time. Moisture in the terrarium evaporates from the soil and plant leaves, condensing on the roof and walls. The condensed water drips down, remoistening the soil in a continual closed-loop process. The atmosphere inside is jungle-like, with high humidity, warm temperatures, and no drafts—perfect conditions for many of the tropic-native houseplants that are common today. As long as the terrarium's top is sealed, this process can continue for months or even years.

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