



Musa Care Details

- Musa sikkimensis and basjoo will tolerate quite severe frosts with protection in the winter if left out all year round. Musella lasiocarpa when 2+ years old can stay outside all year round with the same protection.
- They are quite hardy bananas and can be grown outside all year round with protection or contained in a pot. Do not try to over-winter outside if the plants have grown less than approximately 2 feet tall as the roots are usually not properly developed.
- All Musa produce new growth readily between April and September and require regular watering to attain maximum growth. The exception is Musella lasiocarpa. This banana should ideally have the compost left to dry out a bit between waterings for best results.
- Using a slow or controlled release fertilizer when planting will ensure that your plant is correctly fed and will grow at an optimum rate remembering to re-pot as necessary. John Innes or general multi- purpose compost will usually have sufficient food for the first 4-6 weeks, if no food is added.
- Musa should be planted in full sun for maximum growth or part shade. All banana plants are monocots, having 1 single stem from which the new leaves emerge. If at any time the banana plant gets too large, simply cut the stem to the required height and wait for the new leaves to emerge from the stem! It sounds drastic but it works every time.
- If your plant is to be grown in a pot all the time, please ensure the plant food contains trace elements (It will state this on the container) and re-pot regularly as the plant will soon outgrow any small container. Any general multi-purpose compost will have sufficient food for the first 4-6 weeks, so only watering will be initially necessary. Ideally add 25% Perlite or grit to the compost to aid drainage or simply use John Innes No.2 or No.3 depending upon the size of the plant being re-potted.
- There are a number of methods you can use to over-winter banana plants and some of them are as follows:
 - Keep the banana in a pot or dig it up & bring inside from October until the end of April/May (depending where you live) in a frost-free place.



■ Cut the stem down to whatever height you can manage for the winter and cover with some form of protection. The stems can be cut down just above ground level and simply covered with bark chips or similar.

■ Cut the stem of the plant at about 90cm or whatever height you feel you can cover. Wrap with horticultural fleece (clothes pegs are good to secure or use a fleece jacket) and cover with a cheap compost bin or plastic dustbin. Finally put the lid on to keep out the wet (not pretty but it works). Don't do anything over winter but remove the bin and fleece in April/May. Don't remove the covering if the weather is still frosty though! The leaves re-grow from the 90cm stem. This has the added advantage of producing a taller plant early on.

■ You can leave the leaves on depending on how adventurous you feel and construct some form of frame to cover the plant completely. You can tie bamboo canes or similar together as a frame around the plant, fill with straw and wrap with fleece. Put a waterproof layer (polythene for example) around the top of the structure to complete the job. This may give you a huge plant to start with in the spring but it really depends on how much time and effort you want to put in and how large you want the plant to grow! For really large plants substitute canes for pallets as they are cheap and work well.

■ Winter hardiness depends on a number of factors including the protection offered, how sheltered a location the plant is in, which part of the country you live in, the type of soil it is planted in (heavy clay not a good idea as the plant will rot!) and of course the health of the plant. It is NOT advisable to wrap any plant in direct contact with bubble wrap as there will be no air circulation and the plant will rot!

■ One important point to make though is don't plant your banana plants in very exposed, windy locations as the leaves will just shred and look tatty, though it won't harm the plant. If you are in this position and have no choice, try planting some form of shelterbelt to prevent the worst of the wind. There are many things written about over-wintering banana plants and this is a simple guide only and the choice is of course yours.

■ Banana plants will multiply and produce new plants (offsets or suckers) around the original one. You can either leave these to grow new plants or carefully cut them off, trying to keep as much of the root on and plant into a pot to grow on. If you wish the plant to flower and possibly produce fruit, it is best to only have 3 plants growing in the same pot at any time by simply cutting off new offsets. If there are many offsets then the plant will use too much energy growing foliage and less likely to flower.

■ If you have purchased young plants, please keep them somewhere warm (7°C+) until they have established in at least a 2litre container. This will give the plant a much better chance of surviving colder weather if it has an established root structure.

■ Finally Musa are monocarpic, meaning that once they have flowered, they die. Keep some of the suckers to ensure that if you successfully flower the plant, you still have a good supply of plants!

Please have a look at www.easytropicals.com for companion ideas and a general hardiness guide. If you have any questions please email for a prompt reply.

Many thanks for looking.