



Musa Care Details

- Some Musa will tolerate frost with protection in the winter if left out all year round. These are Musa basjoo, sikkimensis and Musella lasiocarpa in that particular order of hardiness.
- These are quite hardy for bananas and can be grown outside all year round with protection or contained in a pot with increased protection.
- Most other Musa are not possible to grow outside all year in the UK and need to be grown indoors or outside in the warmer months only.
- 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.
- Musa are hungry plants when actively growing and using a slow or controlled release fertilizer when planting will ensure that your plant is correctly fed. It will grow at an optimum rate but remember 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 if not possible in part shade.
- All bananas 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 tender banana plants and some of them are as follows:

- Keep the banana in a pot or dig it up and bring inside from September until the end of May (depending where you live) keeping above freezing.
- You can cut the stem down to whatever height you can manage for the winter if the plant is too large and water it **very** sparsely until the spring. Too much water when a plant is dormant will cause the roots and stem to rot and you will kill the plant. Allow the compost to almost dry out before giving very limited water. Over-watering is probably the easiest way to kill a plant in the dormant season!
- Winter hardiness depends on a number of factors including the type of plant (tender bananas will die quickly outside in nearly all of the UK in winter!), 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 & 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. If there are many offsets then the plant will use too much energy growing foliage and is unlikely to flower.
- If you have purchased young plants please keep them somewhere warm (12°C+) until they have established in at least a 1-2litre container. This will give the plant a much better chance of surviving 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!
- When a Musa flowers, the stem swells and the leaves at the growing tip usually become much smaller. The inflorescence (flower) will emerge followed by bunches of small bananas where the flower petals were. If the plant becomes too top heavy, provide support to avoid damaging the fruit.

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.