

# *Musa acuminata*

**Common name:** Banana

**Family:** Musaceae

**Habit:** Giant herb

**Location:** Botanical garden

**Distribution:** *Musa acuminata* is native to Southern Asia, its range comprising the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Many of the modern edible dessert bananas are from this species, although some are hybrids with *Musa balbisiana*. First cultivated by humans around 10 Kya (8000 BCE), it is one of the early examples of domesticated plants.

## **Description:**

It is classified by botanists as an herbaceous plant and an evergreen and a perennial, but not as a tree. The trunk (known as the pseudo stem) is made of tightly packed layers of leaf sheaths emerging from completely or partially buried corms. The leaves are at the top of the leaf sheaths, or petioles and in the subspecies *M. a. truncata* the blade or lamina is up to 22 feet (6.7 m) in length and 39 inches (0.99 m) wide. The inflorescence grows horizontally or obliquely from the trunk. The individual flowers are white to yellowish-white in color. Both male and female flowers are present in a single inflorescence. Female flowers are located near the base (and develop into fruit), and the male flowers located at the tip most top-shaped bud in between leathery bracts. The rather slender fruits are berries.

## **Uses:**

The male flowers are eaten raw or roasted and eaten like artichokes. Unripe fruits are astringent and are eaten as a treatment for diarrhea. The peel and pulp of ripe bananas contain antifungal, antibiotic and dopamine factors. The leaves, dried and made into a syrup, are used in Cuba to treat coughs and chest conditions such as bronchitis. Also, used for packing, wrapping and decorative purposes. The leaves and shoots yield a fiber which can be used for making a high-quality cloth. Fibers from the stem are used for making rugs with a silk-like texture. Fibers from the bark are used for making paper.



