

Cultural Details: **Musa**

Musa ensete (also known as *Ensete ventricosum* or Abyssinian Banana), is grown in the UK as an outdoor and conservatory container plant and 'dot' plant in formal bedding schemes. It grows rapidly once established, and though it is not frost-hardy, it is possible for established plants to last the British Winter outdoors in mild areas if the plant is 'lagged' with an insulator such as bubble-wrap. The single-stemmed plants can reach a height of two metres in six months under very favourable conditions, with fleshy, wide leaves well over a metre in length.

Musa is easy to raise.

Programming the Crop

Sow February to March to obtain large enough plants for sale in the Summer, and for planting out with Summer bedding schemes.

Propagation and Growing-on

Seeds should be soaked for 24 hours in warm water prior to sowing. Sow the large seeds (2 per gram) individually into 8-9cm pots. The compost can be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide, according to the suppliers' guidelines, prior to sowing, (to prevent rotting of the seeds prior to germination) and allowed to drain. Germinate at a temperature of between 20 and 30°C, making sure the compost does not dry out. Germination can be a little erratic.

Plants require a relatively heavy feed programme to keep up with their rapid growth habit. Keep in a bright location, and as warm as possible (ideally over 20°C) to encourage rapid growth. Move the plants on into increasing pot sizes until the required plant size is reached.

Pest and Disease

Remove any dead or dying leaves to prevent attack by *Botrytis*. Monitor for signs of pests such as whitefly, and spider mite (webbing and discolouration of leaves) and treat accordingly.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.