



BANANA

(*Musa* sp.)

You may have noticed that banana “trees” do not look like ordinary trees. They do not have wooden trunks and boughs; they are really perennial herbs. The plants are kept erect by their overlapping leaf stalks which grow up out of the earth. At the top of the plant which grows to between 3 and 9 m in height these stalks open out and have long wide leaves measuring between 1 and 3.5 m long and 30 cm wide.

The banana plant loves rich sandy loam soil with good drainage since banana roots tend to deteriorate in soil that is waterlogged. Nonetheless, bananas need lots of water and grow well in Portland and St. Mary which receive much rainfall.

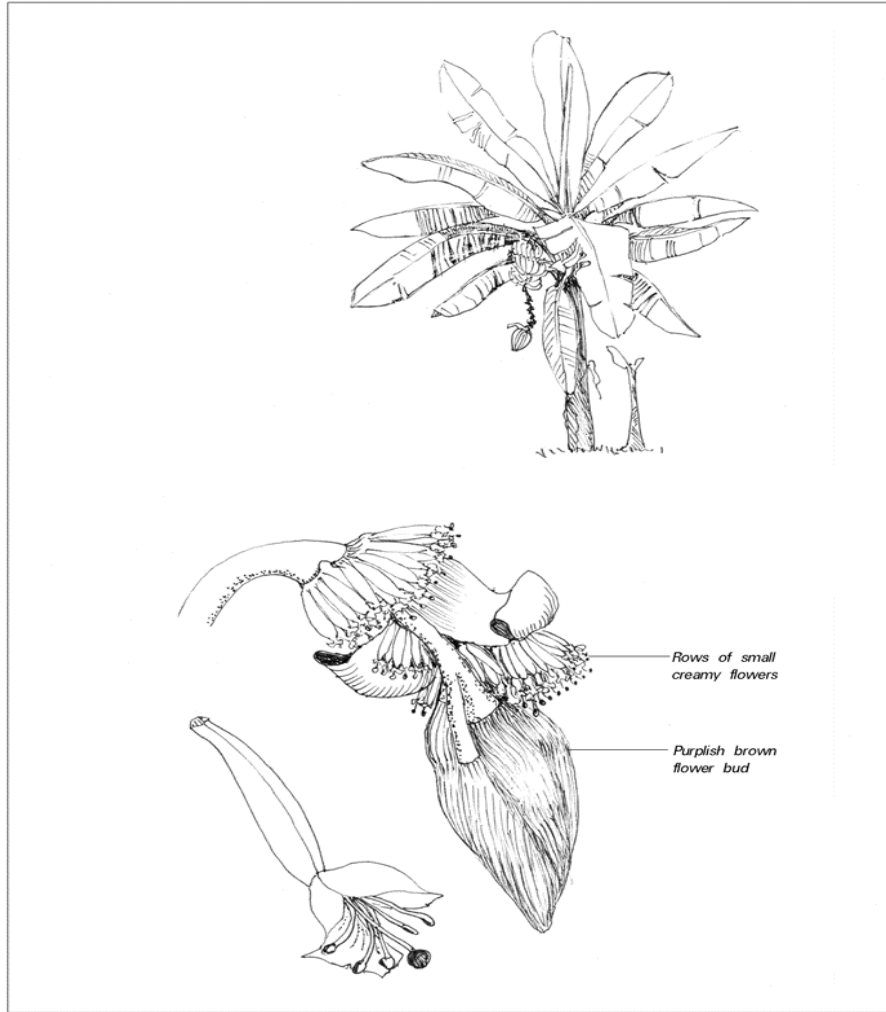
The banana plant puts out a giant purple-red bud on a thick stem and as the bud develops it opens to reveal clusters of small flowers. Each cluster becomes tiny green bananas forming a bunch. Bananas are propagated by shoots or suckers which grow out from the roots of the plant.

Bananas originated in southern Asia but now grow in all tropical countries. The earliest variety cultivated in Jamaica was the Gros Michel.

Panama disease (a fungus) and leaf spot have been two of the diseases that have caused much harm to the banana industry. The banana weevil borer is also a pest. Today, many banana varieties more resistant to these problems have been introduced.

BANANA (*Musa sp.*)

Family: Musaceae	Species: <i>Musa spp.</i>	Author: Sw.
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Height: 9m	Habitat: Cultivated, sea level-1000m	Persistence: Evergreen
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