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Please DO NOT use Genetically Modified Seeds(GM or GMO). Ask your seed provider and if they cannot give you written proof, do not buy the seed.

Try to save your own seed that you know is safe and you will get more money for your vegetables if they are organically grown, which means no pesticide use for the previous 5 years.

Bananas Plant

Bananas are one of the fastest growing perennial plants that grow from rhizomes. The trunks of the banana are actually fleshy sheaths that are formed by leaf sheaths arranged in concentric layers.

The stem of the banana tree grows from a corn that is planted underground. The stem grows out through the center of the stalk and takes about 12-15 months to grow mature. Each stalk is capable of producing just one huge flower after which it withers off. New stalks then sprout from the rhizome (underground stem that puts out roots). Banana plants are immensely attractive and create a tropical atmosphere to the entire surroundings.

When to plant?

Bananas require heat and a sunny location to be able to grow and produce healthy fruits. So summer is the best time for planting them. Ensure that they are planted in areas where there is abundant sunlight all throughout the day, failing which they would stop growing. If you plant a banana plant in the winter months, plant them where there is enough sun and also reduce the watering to prevent root rot as the winter months will have more moisture trapped in the soil.

Where to plant?

Planting bananas in rocky organic soil which are well draining and areas with lava sand is the best way to plant them. Avoid planting bananas in areas where the soil is always wet or in standing water to prevent root rot. Cactus mix soil gives the best results as it naturally contains lava sand, lava soil and other nutritional items that help in the overall growth. The soil in which you plant the banana tree must not be too wet which can initiate root rot. If the soil retains more water during the winter months, reduce the watering frequency. During summer months, make sure that you give them enough water to prevent them from drying.

How to plant?

First find a good container on which you can plant the banana tree. Choose the right location where there is ample sunlight and sand. Now make a hole that is two times as wide as the container. The depth must be $1\frac{1}{2}$ times more than the depth of the container. Fill the hole with 4 inches of manure and the rest of the height can be covered with soil until you reach a height where the banana tree can

be planted comfortably. Now the bottom of the container has to be broken off and the container must be kept inside the hole in such a way that the edge of the container is around 2 inches above the soil. Cut off the edges and two-thirds part of the hole with soil mix and one-third part with native soil. Water the plant well and form a berm (raised bank) around the plant with the remaining part of the soil.

How to water?

Watering of the banana plant must be done carefully as too little and too much water can spoil the plant and lead to root rot and drying. During summer months, you can water the plants in a slow and deep manner every 2 to 3 days. Watering must be done when the top part of the soil is dry. During winter, watering should be less frequent as the sand tends to retain more water. Similarly, during the summer months, it is also important to water frequently as the soil can dry fast due to the hot sun.

Fertilizers required

Being heavy feeders, fertilizing banana plants regularly during the growing season will help in getting healthy bananas. A balanced organic fertilizer which contains all micro-nutrients can be applied whenever you water the plants. Organic fertilizers can also be applied once every month. Organic fertilizers are good and during the flowering season, care must be taken to avoid nitrogen as it can blacken the bananas.

Common diseases

Panama disease is the most common disease affecting plants, especially bananas. The symptoms start at the feeder roots and go on to affect the rhizome and they are where the stele joins the cortex. Brown flecks start appearing on the older leaves and finally the xylem turns brick red, spoiling the entire plant. Moko disease, banana bunchy top, toppling disease, black leaf streak, etc. are other diseases that affect younger plants with similar symptoms.

Weeds and pests

All weeds that are growing in the site must be removed before the banana plant is planted. Common pests affecting banana plant are banana aphid, corm weevil, mealy bugs, etc.

Things to watch out for

If your banana plant is exposed to too much sun during the fruiting season, make sure that you cover the fruit adequately with a light weight material or provide shade to the fruit to prevent sunburn.