



# bananas

## How do bananas grow?

Banana plants look like trees but are actually giant herbs related to lilies and orchids. The plant grows from a root clump (rhizome), similar to a tulip bulb. The banana plant grows quickly and can reach heights of 6 metres or 20 feet in less than one year.



After growing for about 6-8 months, the plant develops a nice crown of leaves. Then a flowering stem emerges from the top, and a large bud begins to develop. As the bud unfolds, it reveals double rows of tiny flowers. Each of these flowers will become a banana, or a "finger." Each row of bananas is called a "hand" and is made up of 14 to 20 fingers. Each stem grows 9 to 12 hands, which means that a single banana plant can produce up to 240 bananas.

About 14 days after the stem has emerged, the weight of the growing bananas causes the stem to hang upside down. At this stage, many farmers cover the fruit with a bag to help protect it from insects and sun damage. Farmers also support the plant by tying it to neighboring plants with twine. This helps prevent the plant from toppling over from the weight of the bananas.

After one growth cycle, the banana plant will be cut down and a new plant will grow from the root clump left behind.

Check out this 3.34 minute video from Dole on "How do bananas grow?"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRPVDzgalbA>

# Where did bananas come from?

Bananas originated in Southeast Asia. Today they are grown in hot, humid, tropical areas around the world, from South and Central America to India, China and Africa. Modern agriculture has helped people grow bananas in non-tropical areas such as California, USA.

## Did you know?

- There are over 500 types of bananas!
- Bananas can be found in other colours, including red.
- The most common banana variety sold in Canada is the Cavendish banana.
- Tarantulas like to hide in banana leaves.
- Bananas are 75% water.
- Wild bananas grow with large, hard seeds, while commercial bananas are grown with the seeds reduced to little brown specks.
- Banana leaves and fibre from the plants are used as cooking materials, plates, umbrellas, seat pads for benches, fishing lines, clothing and soles for shoes.

## Banana Nice Cream

1. Peel bananas and chop into small pieces, one inch or less. The smaller the pieces, the easier to puree.
2. Place banana pieces on a wax paper lined baking sheet and freeze at least 2 hours until solid. Transfer frozen banana pieces to a freezer bag to use later or continue to step 3.
3. Place frozen banana pieces into a high-speed blender or food processor and pulse.
4. Scrape down the sides and pulse again. Continue pulsing and scraping until the banana reaches a creamy, soft-serve ice cream texture.
5. Enjoy as soft-serve ice cream or transfer to a freezer safe bowl and freeze until solid, like traditional ice cream.

Note: you can use more than one banana if your blender or food processor is large enough.

## Joke Corner

Q. Why did the banana go to the doctor?

A. Because it wasn't peeling well.

Q. How does a banana answer the phone?

A. "Yellow?"

