

Plantain

Musa balbisiana

Height: 16 feet

Spread: 8 feet

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Plantain Banana, Wild Banana

Description:

A fast growing, ornamental evergreen perennial producing clumps of large upright leaves and red to maroon flowers; pale yellow fruit is inedible unless cooked; will tolerate brief light frost conditions; a great garden or landscape accent

Ornamental Features

Plantain is a wonderfully ornamental plant with characteristically tropical foliage, uniquely interesting flowers and delicious edible fruit. Its attractive enormous textured oval leaves remain green in color throughout the year. This plant features bold panicles of dark red flowers with violet overtones dangling from the stems in mid spring. The fruits are showy yellow bananas carried in abundance from early to late fall. The lime green stems can be quite attractive.

This plant is primarily grown as an ornamental, but it's also valued for its edible qualities. The tart bananas are most often used in the following ways:

- Cooking
- Baking

Landscape Attributes

Plantain is an herbaceous evergreen perennial with a towering form, with a high canopy of foliage concentrated at the top of the plant. Its wonderfully bold, coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced garden composition.



Plantain fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Plantain flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Plantain is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Plantain will grow to be about 16 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 8 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 4 feet from the ground. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.



Plantain fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Bananas are curious plants in a botanical sense. Strictly speaking they are perennials, with individual shoots rising up from underground rhizomes and maturing in one to two years, then ultimately dying after producing fruit, to be replaced by new shoots from the base. However, given their ultimate size and coarseness they almost behave as small trees in the landscape. This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America..

Plantain is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.