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TEMPERATURE AND SOIL MOISTURE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS. BANANAS LIKE THEIR WATER BUT CANNOT TOLERATE FLOODING CONDITIONS. THEY DO BEST ON FLAT, WELL DRAINED SOIL WITH A PH OF 5-5.7. YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SOIL TESTED AT THE LEE COUNTY IFAS EXTENSION I FORT MYERS. MULCHING IS IMPORTANT FOR BANANA HEALTH.



IN SOUTH FLORIDA, MARCH, APRIL, AND MAY ARE THE BEST MONTHS FOR PLANTING IF IRRIGATION IS AVAILABLE. OTHERWISE PLANTING

SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL THE ONSET OF THE RAINS IN JUNE. PLANTING HOLES SHOULD BE LARGE ( 3 FT WIDE BY 2 FT DEEP). ADDITION OF ORGANIC MATTER OR A SAND-PEAT MOSS MIXTURE IS ADVISED. PLANTS SHOULD BE WATERED IN THOROUGHLY AND SURROUNDED BY A HEAVY LAYER OF MULCH.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS BANANA CULTIVARS BUT SOME DO BETTER IN SW FLORIDA THAN OTHERS. THE DWARF CAVENDISH PRODUCES LARGE BUNCHES OF MEDIUM SIZE FRUIT. THE ONE KNOWN AS LADY FINGERS PRODUCES SMALL, SWEET FRUIT BUT CANNOT TOLERATE WINDY CONDITIONS. THE BANANAS CALLED APPLE WORK WELL HERE. HUA MOA IS A LEADING CULTIVAR IN S.W. FLORIDA BUT REQUIRES INTENSIVE CARE. GOLDFINGER IS AN EXCELLENT DESSERT TYPE.

IN GENERAL, BANANAS SHOULD BE PLANTED IN FULL SUN AND SHOULD BE KEPT ABOUT 10 FT AWAY FROM OTHER TREES, BUILDINGS AND WALLS. NOW THAT YOU HAVE PLANTED YOUR NEW TREE, BE PATIENT. FRUITS WILL MATURE IN 10-12 MONTHS WITH THE FIRST BATCH BEING A BIT SMALLER THAN FOLLOWING ONES. IN FLORIDA'S SANDY SOIL, BANANAS SHOULD BE FERTILIZED 4-6 TIMES A YEAR WITH 3-1-6 SLOW RELEASE. AT LEAST ONE NUTRITIONAL SPRAY CONTAINING MANGANESE AND ZINC IS SUGGESTED. BANANAS NEED ABOUT 4-6 INCHES OF WATER PER MONTH OR 1-1 1/2 INCHES PER WEEK.

NOW COMES THE FUN PART. BUNCHES SHOULD BE CUT WHEN THE BANANA FINGERS ARE PLUMP BUT BEFORE THEY TURN YELLOW. THIS USUALLY MEANS TAKING OFF THE FRUIT 7-14 DAYS PRIOR TO RIPENING ON THE PLAN HANGING THEM IN A COOL, SHADY PLACE IMPROVES FLAVOR. SOME PLANTS PRODUCE 25-40 LBS PER BUNCH SO PREPARE AHEAD. BANANAS SHOULD NEVER BE REFRIGERATED. HAPPY GARDENING.



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