

## Growing Banana's From Seed (Musa, Musella and Ensete)

1. Cleanliness is the most important watch word at all stages, bananas need high temps with high humidity to germinate – so do fungus and bacteria, so ensure everything is clean. To get a soil mix that is free from anything you don't want buy seed starting mix and sterilise it in the microwave or use a homemade mix of coir/peat along with perlite, which is an ideal medium for germinating banana's. Get zip lock bags to place the seeds in, the bigger the bag the better – up to the 2 litre/half gallon size.

2. You will need a propagator or heat mat and, if you are dealing with Musa or Musella, I would also recommend a cheap timing switch that can produce day/night on/off periods. If you have no access to a propagator or heated mat then you may use an airing cupboard for **Ensete** or for **Musa/Musella** wait till late spring when temp differences will occur on a windowsill.

3. Soak seeds for about 24-48 hours (or more) changing the water daily. Some seeds have a lot of banana pulp and might need to be scrubbed a few times as they soak. After they are soaked, give them a scrub and rinse with either diluted hydrogen peroxide, or a 10% bleach solution. Some bleach tends to cling to seeds and makes them feel slimy, and if this is the case give them an extra wash with ordinary soap wash to get the bleach off.

4. Ensure that the growing medium is uniformly moist (not wet). If you can squeeze a drop or two of water out of a handful then it is right. More or less than this then add more water or more dry medium until you achieve the desired degree. Then sprinkle the soaked seeds on the surface, and sprinkle a little more damp mix just so they are barely covered.

5. Now for **Musa and Musella**, set your timer for being on from anywhere from 5 to 12 hours on. It's up to you I've had results with short and long, but now I do around 8 – 10 hours on. The idea here is to create a day time lift of around 20 Deg F over the ambient which should be around 60 Deg F (so for 8 hours they are at 80 Deg F). Place the sealed bags in the propagator. For **Ensete**, a variation is not desirable, so no timer should be used.

6. Check regularly for signs that the bags are getting too hot and adjust the thermostat accordingly. If the soil is drying out, add more water but not so much as to make it overly wet.

7. No need for a light to germinate them, they will do it in pitch black, but you'll need to check them almost every day, because if you miss a seedling that has sprouted and they stretch too much for light then they use all their reserves, and don't have enough energy to

produce the first leaf, then they bend over and die. Be careful not to expose them to full sunshine too quickly either if they have been in a dark place.

Once the first leaf shows, then pot them up separately, preferably in a pot which then gets enclosed in a Ziploc bag to keep the humidity up. Fertilise after around three weeks and pot on again when 3 leaves have been produced and no need for the bag at this point on. Introduce to bright light gradually, they grow as part of the understory at first so only get light that is filtered by the canopy.