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### *Musa x paradisiaca*

[Synonyms : *Musa x sapientum*]

**PLANTAIN** is a perennial. Native to tropical Asia, it has finger-shaped flowers.

It is also known as Adam's banana, Adam's apple, Banana, *Banan* (Danish, Swedish), *Banananye* (Creole), *Banane* (German), *Bananeira de Prata* (Portuguese), *Bananenstaude* (German), *Bananier* (French), *Chuối tiêu* (Vietnamese), Commercial banana, Cooking banana, French plantain, Guiana arrowroot, Horse banana, Hybrid plantain, *Kel* (Gujarati), *Kela* (Hindi), Paradise banana, *Pisang tandok* (Malay), Plantain banana, *Plantanos* (Latin American), *Plátano* (Spanish), and Silver banana.

*Paradisiaca* means 'of or from Paradise'.

The plantain's arrival in tropical America is debated as much as that of the banana (*Musa acuminata*). Certainly Negro slaves absorbed them as a significant part of their diet, whether boiled or roasted.

This indigestible (when fresh), banana-like fruit is used unripe mainly in the tropics. It must be cooked and is eaten like a vegetable eg. potato (*Solanum tuberosum*). It is also dried and ground into flour which is sometimes known as Guiana arrowroot and this can be used in convalescent or invalid food.)

Locally Hawaiians used to rub the tongue or the inside of the mouth with a flower bud (or the juice from a young flower) as a kind of tonic after weakness brought on by stomach upsets.

Like bananas the leaf bases (or stem) and the flower stems of the plantain yield fibre.

Medicinally, the juice from the leaves has been used in the East as a remedy for snake bites.

Locally in northern India a pill made with the leaf bases as an ingredient is taken as a contraceptive.