Banana

A gigantic tropical herb consisting of a pseudostem made up of leaf sheaths with an inflorescence pushing through the sheaths

Basically two types of fruit
- Banana: Consumed mostly as fresh fruit (AA, AAA)
- Plantain: Cooking banana (AB, ABB, AAB)

Staple food in the tropics
Bananas now one of most popular and cheapest fruit imports
An amazing horticultural achievement

Seedy bananas used for wind breaks, Hawaii
History of Horticulture: Lecture 36

Suckering in banana  Banana as shade crop for nutmeg

Banana inflorescence, Hawaii

Banana inflorescence
Banana inflorescence

Banana inflorescence

Banana bunch
Greenhouse production in Morocco for banana

Greenhouse bananas in Morocco
Greenhouse bananas in Morocco

History of Banana
Cultivated in southeast Asia in antiquity
Seedless types selected
Known by reputation to Theophrastus
Introduced to Mediterranean region in 650
May have moved to Africa by Arab traders in first century or from India via southern Arabia and Ethiopia
Many cultivars in Uganda suggesting long history
Established early in New World

History of Banana in Latin America
In last half of 19th century, Captain Lorenzo D. Baker and Minor C. Keith introduced the first bananas to Boston and the US Northeast between 1870 and 1889
Fruit an immediate success leading to banana bonanza
American entrepreneurs sought to control both banana production and trade
A combination of sea captains, railroad builders, and adventurers formed the Boston Freight Company which became the United Fruit company (1899)
Company became plantation and shipping monopoly
Developed horticultural and shipping techniques and system of plantation management
Their efforts made banana one of the first fresh foods to be internationally commercialized
Bananas of high quality now available the year around at moderate prices the world over
A significant horticultural achievement

Bananas and Colonialism
United Fruit Company was aggressive in the unstable frontier of Central America
Industry unique because no other perishable produce brought such a long distance to market or available without regard to season
Industry based on the fact that fruit could be picked green and ripened off the plant

However, company subject to severe, constant, and bitter criticism as “Industrial Colonialism” despite the fact that conditions on plantation probably better than in rural areas
Criticism based on
- Monopoly exploitation
- Political manipulation
- Abuse of native labor
- Disregard for human hardships
- Preemptory management tactics
It became obvious that a single large American company was to directly interfere with the political fortunes of a number of Central American countries, admittedly corrupt and greedy
Not unlike Standard Oil in the Mideast
Persistent revolutions and coups were the result and the epithet of Banana Republics was applied to these countries, a shameful period of US-Latin American interactions
With the present World Trade Organization, the banana wars continue between European and American companies vying to divide and dominate the world market for banana
The banana wars continue