

# PINEAPPLE

Common Names: Pineapple, Pina, Nanas

Origin: Brazil and Paraguay. It had spread through South and Central America to the West Indies before Columbus arrived. In 1493 Columbus found the fruit on the island of Guadeloupe and carried it back to Spain and it was spread from there around the world on sailing ships that carried it for protection against scurvy. It reached England in 1660 and was greenhouse fruited there in 1720. It became a luxury fruit enjoyed only by the rich.

## DESCRIPTION

Growth Habit: A small tropical or near-tropical herbaceous, perennial, with long sword-like leaves, arranged in a spiral around a short stem.

Foliage: Sword-like leaves may or may not bear marginal spines. They are stiff, leathery in texture.

Flowers: An inflorescence at the end of the stem. Seed are generally found in commercially grown pineapple. The flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds and are very hard, black flattish round to oval in shape no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in length.

Fruit: Develops from many small fruits fused together. Size varies from one to ten pounds or more. Oval to cylindrical in shape and white to yellowish or orange inner color.

## CULTURE

Location: Plant where the temperature remains warmest such as the south side of a home, or in an unshaded portion of garden.

Soils: Well-drained sandy loam, mildly acid and fertile is best, but the plant will tolerate many soils if well drained. A pH of 4.5 to 6.5 is desirable.

Fertilization: Of the minor elements, iron is needed in higher amounts, particularly in high pH soils. Iron may be supplied by foliar sprays of ferrous sulfate. Nitrogen should be added every four months. Urea, also, can be foliar fed.

Irrigation: The plant is surprisingly drought tolerant, but adequate soil moisture is necessary for good fruit production.

Planting: Pineapples are planted outside during the summer months. A ground cover of black plastic works very well for pineapples, both as protection from weeds and for the extra heat it seems to absorb. It also helps conserve moisture. Traditionally, plants are spaced 12 inches apart. Crowns set about 2 inches deep, suckers and slips 3 inches to 4 inches deep.

Propagation: By new vegetative growth. There are four general types, 'Slips' which arise from the stalk below the fruit, 'suckers' which originate at the axils or leaves, 'crowns' which grow from the top of the fruits, and 'ratoons' which come out from the underground portions of the stems. Although 'slips' and 'suckers' are the preferred, 'crowns' are the main planting material for home gardeners. These are obtained from store-bought fruit and are removed from the fruit by twisting the crown until it comes free. Although the crown may be quartered to produce four slips, in California's marginal conditions it is

best not to cut or divide the crown. The bottom leaves are removed and the crown is left to dry for two days, then planted or started in water.

Pests and Diseases: Mealybugs are spread by ants. In most commercial growing areas, nematodes are also damaging.

Miscellaneous: Fruiting can be forced when the plant is mature by using calcium carbide applied to the terminal bud either as a few grains (10-12) or in solution (30 gm to 1 gal water). Foliar sprays of naphthalene acetic acid (1 gm in 10 gal water) or B-hydroxyethyl hydrazine. Of the three, the last is most effective. The plants usually produce for about four years, but they may last longer in Texas since the life cycle is slowed down by cooler weather.

## CULTIVARS

Smooth Cayenne: 5 – 6 lbs, pale yellow to yellow flesh. Cylindrical in shape and with high sugar and acid content. Well adapted to canning and processing. Leaves without spines. This is the variety from Hawaii, and the most easily obtainable in U.S. grocery stores.

Hilo: A compact 2 – 3 lb Hawaiian variant of the Smooth Cayenne. The fruit is more cylindrical and produces many suckers but no slips.

Red Spanish: 2 – 4 lbs, pale yellow flesh with pleasant aroma; squarish in shape. Well adapted for shipping as fresh fruit to distant markets. Leaves spiny.

Kona Sugarloaf: 5 – 6 lbs, white flesh with no woodiness in the center. Cylindrical in shape, it has high sugar content but no acid. An incredibly delicious fruit.

Natal Queen: 2 – 3 lbs, golden yellow flesh, crisp texture and delicate mild flavor. Well adapted to fresh consumption. Keeps well after ripening. Leaves spiny.

Pernambuco (Eleuthera): 2 – 4 lbs with pale yellow to white flesh. Sweet, melting and excellent for eating fresh. Poorly adapted for shipping. Leaves spiny.

If you have any question please call, write or drop by:

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