



AUSTRALIAN BANANAS

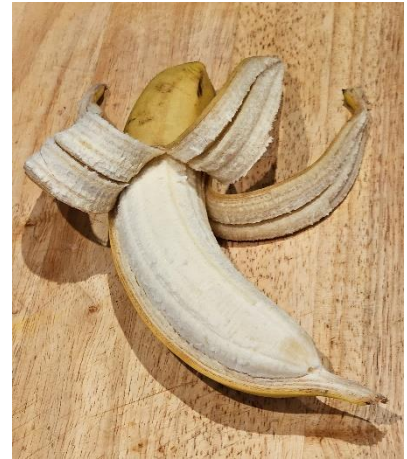
Alex's favourite fast facts

(including why bananas are bent!)

- ➔ Incredibly, Australian's munch their way through about 5,000,000 bananas every single day. Yes, that's right - five million bananas every day!

So, if you put those 5,000,000 bananas end-to-end, the line would stretch from Sydney to Melbourne. That's an incredibly long banana freeway!

- ➔ Bananas are a very old fruit - over 10,000 years old! Bananas were first introduced into Australia back in the mid-1800s from south-east Asia by Chinese migrant communities.



Back then, those bananas were small and only about as long as an adult's finger. This led to the Arabian traders at the time naming them 'banan' which is based on the Arabic word for 'finger'. Just add an extra 'a' and of course, that's what we call the fruit today - BANANA!

- ➔ The most popular type of banana grown in Australia are 'Cavendish' bananas. These are likely to be the bananas that you see in your local supermarket. 'Lady finger' bananas, are also grown in Australia and are yummy. These bananas are naturally sweeter and a bit smaller than regular bananas. You might know someone who has a Lady finger banana plant growing in their yard.
- ➔ Bananas grow on what are thought to be the largest plants on earth that do not have a woody stem like trees. Yes, that's right, bananas grow on 'plants', not trees. Incredibly, banana plants are officially referred to as 'giant herbs' and they can grow up to nine metres tall.
- ➔ It takes about 12 months for a banana plant to produce its first large bunch of bananas.
- ➔ People living in Western Australia were the first to grow and taste Australian bananas. However, today about 90% of all the bananas grown in Australia come from around Tully and Innisfail in north Queensland.
- ➔ An average bunch of bananas growing on a banana plant contains 150 - 200 individual bananas and the bunch can weigh about 35 - 50 kilograms!



AUSTRALIAN BANANAS

Alex's favourite fast facts

- ➔ There are around 500 different varieties of banana plants growing around the world, including, would you believe, a red variety!
- ➔ All fresh bananas that are for sale in Australia are actually grown in Australia - isn't that great news! It's important to keep overseas bananas out of Australia because they could have pests and diseases that could threaten the health of our lovely Aussie bananas.
- ➔ It is a well-known fact that the human body is made up of about 60% water. Did you know, that even though a peeled banana feels firm, it is actually made up of 75% water!



- ➔ Now - what you've been waiting for - why are bananas bent? Think about it - how many fruits do you know of that grow on large plants or trees and grow (and hang) down towards the ground? It seems that almost every single fruit grows this way - except for (you guessed it) BANANAS!

Bananas are bent due to something known as 'negative geotropism'. This means that as bananas grow and develop, they defy gravity and curl upwards toward the sun. How cool is that?

- ➔ Sometimes you will see bananas labelled as 'organic'. What does that mean? Organic banana growers do not use synthetic fertilisers and pesticides on their farms, which sounds like a great idea. This minimises chemicals getting into the soil, in our waterways, and in our precious ecosystems.

Organic banana farmers use a vinegar-based spray to combat weeds. A 'Biopest' oil is sprayed via helicopter every 10 days which pesky insects do not like. This also keeps diseases under control on the farm.

- ➔ Another interesting snippet about organic bananas is that they are left on their plants to ripen naturally. Organic bananas are usually picked just five days before they are sent to the market.

Non-organic bananas do not ripen naturally on the plant. They can be picked up to two weeks earlier than organic bananas.



AUSTRALIAN BANANAS

Alex's favourite fast facts

References

- Australian Bananas: <https://www.australianbananas.com.au/Pages/all-about-bananas/the-banana-story>
- Australian Organic: <https://austorganic.com/organic-food-production/>