

Bananas in danger of becoming extinct

27th January, 2016



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via Lisa Ritager on flickr.com

There is bad news for banana lovers. The most common banana in the world is in danger of becoming extinct. It is called the Cavendish banana people eat it all over the world. A fungus called Tropical Race 4 (TP4) is killing millions of banana plants. The fungus

blocks small tubes inside the plant that absorb water. This means the plant cannot get the water it needs and so it dies. Scientists first discovered TP4 in Malaysia in 1990. It quickly spread to other parts of South-East Asia and then to Australia and Africa. TP4 is spread in dirt that is carried by the wind, water, cars and even people's boots. A tiny amount of TP4 can spread across large areas very quickly. Some scientists believe TP4 could kill the banana industry.

This is not the first time that a variety of banana has become extinct. Before we started eating the Cavendish banana, we ate a variety called the Gros Michel. Fifty years ago, the Gros Michel banana was the main banana grown around the world. However, it was hit by a fungus called Panama Disease. The Gros Michel banana became extinct in 1965 and banana growers switched to the Cavendish banana. The problem for the banana industry is that even if they burn all their banana plants, the fungus stays in the soil. This means new plants cannot be grown. Scientists say one option is genetically modified bananas that are resistant to diseases like TP4 and Panama Disease.

Sources: theinertia.com / independent.co.uk / bbc.com

Writing

The world would be in trouble without bananas. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

bad news / banana lovers / common / fungus / small tubes / dirt / a tiny amount / variety / extinct / banana industry / new plants / genetically modified / resistant

True / False

- The world's most common banana has just become extinct. T / F
- The world's most common banana is in danger from a fungus. T / F
- A banana disease is stopping banana plants from getting water. T / F
- The banana disease can spread via cars and on people's boots. T / F
- This is the first time a variety of banana could become extinct. T / F
- Today's banana disease was first discovered in Panama. T / F
- Burning all banana plants will not help solve the problem. T / F
- GM bananas would also not be able to resist the banana diseases. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. in danger | a. type |
| 2. absorb | b. dirt |
| 3. parts | c. very small |
| 4. tiny | d. premier |
| 5. kill | e. at risk |
| 6. variety | f. soak up |
| 7. main | g. changed |
| 8. switched | h. wipe out |
| 9. soil | i. choice |
| 10. option | j. areas |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about bananas?
- What could people eat instead of bananas?
- Who would suffer if bananas died out?
- What are the health benefits of bananas?
- What do you know about the different varieties of banana?
- Would you eat GM bananas?
- What other options are there for the banana industry?
- What questions would you like to ask a banana grower?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. There is bad | a. water |
| 2. in danger of | b. called Panama Disease |
| 3. small tubes that absorb | c. by the wind |
| 4. TP4 is spread in dirt that is carried | d. modified |
| 5. A tiny amount of TP4 | e. diseases like TP4 |
| 6. the first time that a variety of banana | f. news for banana lovers |
| 7. it was hit by a fungus | g. in the soil |
| 8. the fungus stays | h. has become extinct |
| 9. genetically | i. becoming extinct |
| 10. bananas that are resistant to | j. can spread |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How bad is this news?
- How much of a banana lover are you?
- How surprised are you at this news?
- Why do you think scientists cannot help the banana plants?
- How useful are bananas?
- How would you feel if all bananas died?
- What three adjectives best describe bananas, and why?

Spelling

- There is bad news for banana seovlr
- The most nommoc banana in the world
- A snguuf called Tropical Race 4
- small tubes that sbabro water inside the plant
- A tiny oauntm of TP4 can spread
- TP4 could kill the banana uytrsnid
- a eaivyrt of banana
- growers whtdisce to the Cavendish banana
- new plants cannot be orwng
- one toonpi
- genetically idmedfoi (GM) bananas
- bananas that are resistant to sdesasei

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. f	3. j	4. c	5. h
6. a	7. d	8. g	9. b	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Pineapples

You think pineapples are the most useful fruit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their fruit. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): bananas, melons or dates.

Role B – Bananas

You think bananas are the most useful fruit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their fruit. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): pineapples, melons or dates.

Role C – Melons

You think melons are the most useful fruit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their fruit. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): bananas, pineapples or dates.

Role D – Dates

You think dates are the most useful fruit. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so good about their fruit. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): bananas, melons or pineapples.

Speaking – Fruits

Rank these fruits with your partner. Put the most useful at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| • apple | • pineapple |
| • melon | • strawberry |
| • date | • papaya |
| • blueberry | • banana |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.