



The World of Bananas in Hawaii: Then and Now

By Angela Kay Kepler, Francis G. Rust

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Winner of the 2012 Ka Palapala Po‘okela Award for Excellence in Natural Science

The World of Bananas in Hawai‘i: Then and Now—unique, comprehensive, colorful, authoritative, readable and with over 1,900 color illustrations—culminates nine years of exhaustive library research coupled with painstaking field and agricultural investigations in Hawai‘i and other Pacific islands. It is the first book about bananas in Hawai‘i and a major contribution to Hawaiian culture. It is also the first attempt to trace banana/plantain evolution within the Pacific. Truly a “banana bible,” it is written in highly accessible prose embracing a broad array of topics. Lavishly illustrated, it covers virtually every edible and inedible banana in Hawai‘i, Polynesian introduced and international, including the spectacular ornamentals and *fe‘i*.

The World of Bananas reflects a deep respect for Hawaiian oral history and esteemed post-contact literature, reviving long-forgotten traditional foods, chants, crafts, and everyday clothing woven from bananas. As a result of Angela Kepler’s 30-year Pacific-wide ecological research, readers will encounter original ideas (e.g., how migrant seabirds likely guided Marquesan seafarers to colonize Hawai‘i) and delight in the multihued tapestry of true-to-life banana tales from the nebulous dawn of Hawaiian history to the present (e.g., the rediscovery of legendary banana groves). The authors shed fascinating new light on Hawai‘i’s little-known “pregnant” banana, *mai‘a h?pai*, and resurrect a long-forgotten minor goddess, Hina-‘ea, whose curative *mai‘a lele* banana once healed vitamin A deficiencies in children.

Interweaving extensive original research with judicious gleanings from a tiny worldwide network of banana specialists, this book provides new, dependable, and pictorial descriptions for 140 living varieties and 22 kinship groups, illustrated keys separating similar cultivars, hundreds of name synonyms, and information on pesticide-free care and maintenance, nutritional deficiencies, and troubleshooting pests/diseases. The mouth-watering recipe chapter includes savory dishes such as banana mayonnaise and meat-plantain casseroles.

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Editorial Review

Review

[This book] will influence landscape and agricultural plantings in Hawaii and throughout the tropical world. Nothing even remotely close to this body of knowledge has existed before, and it was written specifically for Hawaii gardeners.-- "*West Oahu Today*"

Review

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Review

Stupendous. Monumental. A work of epic proportions! This is a truly 'must have' for all who are interested in bananas! A shot in the arm for Polynesian culture. A book for all Hawaiians to be proud of. An inspiration to all scientists to think holistically. The fabulous photos and wonderful stories impart the breath of life. (**Jeffrey Daniells**, Agri-Science, Australia)

The authors may well be the only scientists in history to publish such a multifaceted book on a single crop . . . [a] *tour de force* of immensely ramified scientific documentation in a fluent style . . . delicious tales, true-to-life from ancient times, propel the reader onwards . . . proving the banana's immense but previously unrecognized value in ancient Hawai'i . . . a broad vision of cultural history and peoples of Oceania. (**Edmond De Langhe**, founder, International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP), France)

Only when an enduring love of bananas conjoined with deep knowledge and hard work could such a masterpiece be created. Thoroughly researched, exquisitely illustrated, packed with obscure facts and written in an easy-to-read conversational tone, this extraordinary book is the definitive resource on *Musa* spp. in Hawai'i and the Pacific . . . extensive experience with banana cultivation make *The World of Bananas* a true gem, biblical in its importance and permanence. (**Dr. Scot C. Nelson**, CTAHR, University of Hawai'i)

In this richly illustrated paean to bananas, variation in form is the recurring theme in a prose symphony with biological and cultural melodies. I can't remember ever having seen such a wealth of scientific information presented in prose accessible to everyone. The photos complement the text in spectacular fashion. Throughout, the authors reveal their delight in discovery of the natural world. (**Dr. Richard Mansard**, CTAHR, University of Hawai'i)

Just spectacular! It is a gift to us and future generations of Hawaiian and Pacific people, to be treasured for the next 100 years. (**Lisa Raymond**, founding executive director, Maui Nui Botanical Gardens)

An outstanding scientific contribution. This amazing piece of work is also an incredible piece of art. (**Dr. Vincent Lebo**, CIRAD, Vanuatu)

An awe-inspiring, comprehensive labor of love. A masterpiece for the ages. (**Dr. Kamaui Aiona**, NTBG, Hana, Maui)

Remarkable for its scope, indispensable for its level of detail and irresistible for its seamless weave of science, culture and natural history, this book beautifully blends practical facts with folk wisdom using rich illustrations, photos, diagrams and text . . . [it] will surely prove to be 'The Banana Bible' not only across the Pacific, but around the world. (**Jon Letman**, environmental journalist)

Wow. It's been two days since this book showed up on my doorstep, and my jaw is still hanging in amazement. I have about 1,200 books in my collection, and this one surely ranks among the top 10. In terms of content, quality of writing, research, and production, comprehensiveness, and abundance and quality of photos, this is a book without peer. . . . I am constantly tempted to indulge myself in reading this masterpiece. (**David Karp**, University of California, Riverside)

This is an incredible feat. . . . I cannot begin to express my amazement. For many years I have read Pope, Higgins, Handy, old newspaper clippings, Hawai'i forester reports, and listened to oral stories, trying to educate myself to recognize and appreciate the work of my ancestors. You have put together information on not only Hawaiian bananas but others as well. I can hardly wait to read the book in its entirety. (**Jerry Konanui**, a Hawaiian mahi'ai)

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