

Flora & Fauna

Plants, animals, and nature-related activities.

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How to Grow a Welcoming Pineapple Plant

"Hala-kahiki" is the Hawaiian word for pineapple. Since we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Hawaii becoming a state this month, let's grow a pineapple plant and share some pineapple trivia.

You will need

- A fresh, ripe pineapple with a crown of healthy green leaves. Pineapple crowns are often available from your neighborhood supermarket where they sell the peeled and sliced fresh pineapple at their produce counter. Most produce managers will save them for you if you call ahead.
- A container of water.
- A 6-inch pot with drainage holes in the bottom and a saucer.
- Sufficient good quality potting soil with sand added - 1 part sand to 3 parts soil mix is a good ratio.
- Print copies of the [Pineapple Quiz](#) to pass out. Also, print a copy of the [quiz with the answers](#).

Here's what to do

1. Start with a healthy green pineapple crown (the cluster of leaves at the top of the fruit). If you are using a whole pineapple, cut off the leafy top, leaving about 1 inch of the fruit attached. Or, seize the fruit with one hand and the crown with the other and twist.



2. Trim off any remaining fruit flesh, otherwise it will rot. If you are using crowns rescued from the produce department, you will also need to remove any portion of

the fruit that remains.

3. Strip off a few of the small bottom leaves and you will see tiny root *primordia* (white bumps). These are the start of roots just waiting for a chance to grow. You might need to use a magnifying glass to see these baby roots.



4. Place the top in a container of water so the bottom of the pineapple top is submerged. Allow three to four weeks for root growth. You should see hair-like roots coming from the bottom of the pineapple top, which tells you it's time to plant it in soil.

(Note: Some people skip this step and plant directly into soil. Others place the top in a cool dry place and let it dry for 2 - 7 days until a callous forms. Then, it is planted in soil. You might experiment with different methods to see which one works best.)



5. Using a small tub, mix the good quality potting soil with the sand (1 part sand to 3 parts soil). You can use a variety of kitchen utensils to do the mixing, but bare hands also work well.

6. Planting is easy. Take the crown and place it in a pot filled with the soil you just mixed. Make certain there is good drainage. Press into the soil so it is firmly in place, but don't cover the leaves.
7. Place the newly planted pineapple on a saucer on a windowsill with lots of light or outdoors in the shade. Pineapples are not cold hardy, so the spot should be warm.
8. Now wait. When new leaves begin to form, you know you have successfully started a pineapple plant.
9. Water about once a week and enjoy watching your pineapple plant grow! (See ["Care & Feeding" below](#) for more growing information.)

Will you really grow a pineapple?

You probably won't get a pineapple "crop," but you can still enjoy the plant. In order to develop a fruit, the plant needs to bloom. It usually takes from 12 to 18 months for a flower stalk to form. If the plant is vigorous and looks healthy and mature but isn't producing a flower stalk from the center of the crown, you can encourage it to bloom by placing two or three apple cores at the base of the plant. Cover the plant with a clear plastic bag for a couple days. The ethylene gas that a rotting apple releases will usually initiate flowering.

After blooming, the fruit forms. You will know it's ripe when it has a rich golden yellow color throughout. The fruit can be harvested and enjoyed. After fruiting, the plant will produce side shoots called pups. Then the parent plant usually dies.



Things to talk about:

The pineapple is a fruit that carries within its rough textured skin the flavor of the exotic and the lure of a tropical paradise. We have all enjoyed this fruit as a dessert, a juice, a garnish, and a snack. Like most fruits and vegetables, this plant has a fascinating history

and a multitude of myths and legends. Test your pineapple knowledge with this little quiz.

Pineapple Quiz

(**Note:** Pass out copies of [the quiz](#). Ask the group the question and then reveal the answer and discuss.)

TRUE or FALSE? The pineapple originated in Hawaii. (FALSE. We always associate the pineapple with Hawaii, but it's really native to South America. It spread to Central America and the Caribbean before the arrival of Columbus. The pineapple didn't reach Hawaii until the 19th century, carried there by Spanish explorers and traders.)

TRUE or FALSE? When Columbus arrived on the island of Guadeloupe (on his second, less famous voyage to the New World) he was served pineapple wine. (TRUE. Columbus was served both fresh pineapple and pineapple wine. In his journal he wrote, "It is shaped like a pine cone, but is twice as large with excellent flavor. So tender that it can be cut with a knife like a turnip." He described the wine as "agreeable.")

TRUE or FALSE? Pineapples grow on large sprawling trees. (FALSE. Pineapples grow from a rosette-type plant with long spike-like leaves that can be up to three feet long. In the Caribbean, pineapple plants are planted under windows for security.)

TRUE or FALSE? In colonial America, the pineapple was a status symbol. (TRUE. In colonial America, the pineapple was considered the ultimate symbol of success. It was often the most expensive food on the table, and pineapples were commonly rented out as an item of decor. The pineapple symbol was used to decorate bed posts, tablecloths, napkins - anything associated with welcoming guests. Today, the pineapple remains a fitting symbol for the hospitality industry, and pineapple-themed products still abound. From lamps to candle holders to salt and pepper shakers and beyond, the pineapple motif says "Welcome!")



TRUE or FALSE? The name "pineapple" is derived from the native word for the fruit, "pia-apela." (FALSE. It was called "pineapple" because it looked like a pinecone and was a fruit. Apple was a generic term for almost any fruit. The Spanish word for pineapple is "pina," which means "pinecone." The Caribbean natives called this fruit "nana," which can be translated to "flavor." The botanical name for this plant is *Ananas*, or "flavor of flavors.")

TRUE or FALSE? Sir Walter Raleigh named it the King Charles Fruit because it was a fruit that wore a crown. (FALSE. Sir Walter Raleigh called it "the princess of fruits." Others called it the "king of fruits" because they thought it looked like God had placed a crown on its head.)

TRUE or FALSE? The pineapple is in the same family as Spanish moss. (TRUE. The pineapple is in the bromeliad family, as is Spanish moss. This family has a couple thousand members, almost all of them native to the Americas.)

TRUE or FALSE? Pineapple makes a great meat tenderizer because it contains an enzyme called bromelain that digests certain proteins. (TRUE. The enzyme [bromelain](#) is so powerful that it should be used sparingly or it will make the meat fall apart. Pineapple workers usually wear gloves to protect their hands. Prolonged exposure to the bromelain can cause serious irritation.)

TRUE or FALSE? In some parts of the world, people were reluctant to eat pineapple because it was thought to make them sterile. (TRUE. Along the coast of South America it was commonly believed that eating too much pineapple would cause women to become sterile and some claimed it would make men impotent. Other cultures viewed it as an aphrodisiac.)

TRUE or FALSE? One variety of pineapple may weigh as much as 20 pounds when ripe. (TRUE. While most pineapples weigh 3 to 5 pounds, a variety called Giant Kiwi can weigh as much as 20 pounds.)

Other Pineapple Trivia & Fun Facts

- When King Louis XIV of France was presented with his first pineapple, he graciously accepted the fruit and bit into it without removing the coarse skin. He cut his mouth and cursed the ship captain who brought him the gift.
- "Hala-kahiki" is the Hawaiian word for pineapple. When Hawaiians first saw the pineapple, they thought it resembled the [Hawaiian hala tree](#), so they named it "hala-kahiki," meaning "foreign hala."
- James Dole started his first pineapple plantation in Wahiawa, Hawaii, in 1900 and opened his first cannery in 1901.
- In 1911, Henry Ginaca invented the Ginaca machine that could peel and core 35 pineapples per minute, making canned pineapple much easier to produce. Before this, each pineapple had to be peeled and cored by hand. Because of this invention, Dole's pineapple canning business exploded and other pineapple canneries soon adopted the machine.
- Pineapples take about 18 months to grow.
- One cup of pineapple has about 135 calories and 33% of the RDA of Vitamin C.
- A pineapple is ripe if one of its top leaves can easily be pulled out.



Care & Feeding of a Pineapple

Light: It can be grown on any windowsill or outdoors in light to medium shade during warm months.

Soil: This is an adaptable plant that will do well in a wide variety of soils, even sand.

Water: Pineapples are drought tolerant. Giving it a drink once a week is usually sufficient. Generally, they don't like soggy soil, but they can also be started in a glass of water.

Cold: Pineapples are frost sensitive and can be destroyed if they are subjected to temperatures below freezing for more than a few hours.

Containers: They can grow in a 6-inch pot for the first 6 months or so, but may need to be stepped up to a 2-gallon pot before they will develop a full display of leaves and bloom.

Feeding: Half strength Miracle Gro once a month or Osmocote slow release fertilizer for flowering plants twice a year is about all this plant needs. Be careful not to get either fertilizer on the leaves, particularly the center of the crown, sometimes called "the vase." This can cause damage to young leaves just forming or the bud stalk.

Problems: Almost no insect or disease problems. Do not use a copper container or watering can. Copper is fatal to almost all bromeliads, including pineapples.

Sites to See

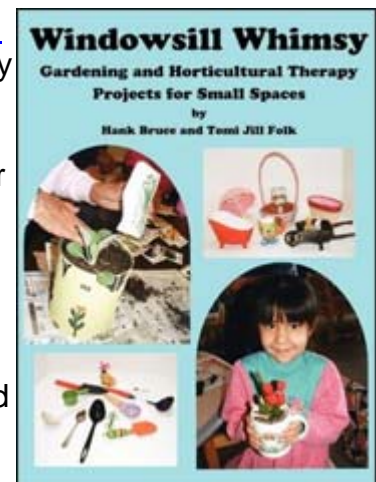
- [The Pineapple, "Princess of Fruits" and Symbol of Hospitality](#)
- [Pineapple Facts & Trivia](#)
- [Pineapple from Wikipedia](#)
- [Save Your Pineapple Top](#)
- [How to Grow a Pineapple from Its Top](#)
- [How to Grow Pineapple Top in a Pot](#)

Resource - Windowsill Whimsy

This project and the quiz are adapted from [Windowsill Whimsy, Gardening & Horticultural Therapy Projects for Small Spaces](#) by Hank Bruce & Tomi Jill Folk.

This is an idea source for horticultural therapy programs, senior care facilities, and individuals of all ages and abilities. These projects and plant-related activities range from easy to difficult, and each has a touch of whimsy. The authors explain that whimsy is the counterpoint to the serious work of being human. These projects were designed by professional horticultural therapists to be fun while serving as great physical, mental, and social exercises for everyone. Contains four kinds of activities:

- Plant projects with creative activities and care notes accompanying each one.



- Craft activities range from creating a "Peace Card" to "Turning Your Problems into Compost."
- Quizzes on everything from garlic to coconuts. These are great conversation starters.
- Short stories that can be read aloud to a group or individually while waiting for the plants to grow. These are great springboards for discussion.

There is also a comprehensive list of both safe and dangerous plants. Activity professionals, counselors, horticultural therapists, family caregivers, and individuals of all ages will find these pages of value. The focus is on empowerment and creativity.
