Ernest Entwistle Cheesman (1898-1983) was an English botanist noted for his work on the Musaceae plant family to which bananas belong. He is considered to be the father of modern *Musa* taxonomy[^1].

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### Career in bananas

Between 1925 and 1937, Cheesman worked as professor of botany at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad. After his return to England, he worked on the taxonomy of Musaceae at the Royal Botanic Gardens, in Kew. As a result of his studies he revived the genus *Ensete*[^2], first published in 1862 by Paul Fedorowitsch Horaninow, but then not accepted. Cheesman made it clear that there are no wild *Musa* native to Africa, only *Ensete*.

Cheesman also developed a coherent classification system for the *Musa* genus, which he divided into four sections: *Australimusa*, *Callimusa*, *Eumusa* and *Rhodochlamys*[^2].

Cheesman noticed that Linneaus' model for *Musa paradisiaca* was a Plantain while the model for *Musa sapientum* was Silk banana. He went on to argue that it was impossible to reconcile within the Linnean nomenclature system the true, wild species of banana and the cultivated types[^3]. The challenge of coming up with an alternative system for cultivated bananas was taken up by two of his young colleagues, Norman Simmonds and Kenneth Shepherd.

Norman Simmonds named the wild banana species *Musa cheesmanii* in his honour.

### References


### Also on this website

Musalit records of scientific articles on bananas published by Cheesman
Related Musapedia pages: *Musa* sections and Nomenclature of cultivated bananas