Musa itinerans

*Musa itinerans* is a wild species of bananas first described by Ernest E. Cheesman from plants grown at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture's field collection in Trinidad[1]. The seeds had been collected in an "evergreen forest at Tagwin, Myitkyina, Upper Burma" (Myanmar). Its name refers to its "travelling" habit, as a sucker can emerge two meters away or more from the mother plant.

Kew's world checklist recognizes 8 varieties, including *M. itinerans var. itinerans*[2]. It was misidentified as *Musa wilsonii* in Chinese literature, a confusion that was clarified in 2001[3].

During his 1954-55 banana collecting expedition to southeast Asia, Norman Simmonds observed variability in fruit colour and the compound tepals of the male flowers in Thailand and India[4].

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Main morphological characteristics

The diagnostic character for this species is its long rhizome. Cheesman describes the pseudostem as 4 m or more in height and 20-25 cm in diameter at the base. The inflorescence is semi-pendulous and the peduncle is velvety. The inside of the bracts is yellow. The individual fruits are about 10 cm in length and 3 cm in diameter and relatively spread out on the bunch. They are not very curved[1].

Distribution and habitat

*M. itinerans* is widely dispersed throughout continental southeast Asia, from northeast India to Vietnam and adjacent islands[5]. In China, it is usually found in secondary tropical rainforests[3].

Genome sequencing

The genome of an individual collected on Hainan Island, China, was sequenced in 2016[6]. The assembled genome size is 462.1 Mb, covering 75.2% of the 615.2 Mb genome and containing 32,456 predicted protein-coding genes. The sequence is available from the Banana Genome Hub[7].
The chloroplast genome was also sequenced\(^8\). The DNA came from leaves collected in China's Yunnan province. The complete chloroplast genome was found to be 168,985 bp long, to contain 113 unique genes, including 79 protein-coding genes, 30 transfer RNA genes, and four ribosomal RNA genes.

*Musa itinerans* and *Musa acuminata* are estimated to have diverged from a common ancestor around 5.8 million years ago\(^6\).

**Reaction to pests and diseases**

None of the plants of *Musa itinerans* exposed to the *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. cubense* strain known as TR4 developed symptoms of *Fusarium wilt* in field and greenhouse trials\(^9\).

**References**

2. Type Musa itinerans in the search field of the *World Checklist of Selected Plant Families*
6. http://www.nature.com/articles/srep31586

**Also on this website**

Musapedia pages on wild banana species

*Musa acuminata*
*Musa balbisiana*
*Musa haekkinenii*
*Musa itinerans*
*Musa schizocarpa*
*Musa serpentina*

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