

GROWING PINEAPPLES

A fun and exciting project if you have the patience and a place to store it over winter. It normally take about 18-24 months from start to finish. Pineapple is a member of the [Bromeliaceae](#) family which are very drought tolerant.

First you need a pineapple. Cut off the crown and remove all the edible portion leaving only the stem and leaves. Remove several layers of the lower leaves until you see several areas of visible root tips. Under each leaf should be a root tip. Turn it upside down and let it dry for a week so the cut end and the leaf scars can harden before planting.

Plant the crown in an 8" pot using a mixture of good light garden soil, sand and 30% organic matter. It must be well drained as it cannot stand wet feet! Pack the soil tightly around the base trying not to get soil on the leaves. Fertilize with time release fertilizer at the time of planting and every two to three months with liquid fertilizer 10-10-10. Water from the leaf cups down.

During the summer place the plant in FULL SUN. Transplant to a larger pot when you see roots growing from the bottom of the pot. It should eventually be in a 3-5 gal. container and the mature plant will be 2 1/2+ ft. tall and wide.

In the winter months place the plant in a sunny window with at least 60 degrees. Take it back outside when the low temperature is above 60 degrees.

To force it to bloom place it in a plastic bag with an apple for a few days. Hopefully it will bloom in May so the fruit will mature before frost. It takes six months from bloom to harvesting. Once the red fruiting bloom appears begin fertilizing lightly with high nitrogen (34-0-0) to produce a large fruit. The fruit are usually around four pounds.

The fruit is ready to pick when it is almost yellow. The weight of the fruit will cause it to bend over naturally when it is ready to harvest. It will almost fall in your hand so it doesn't require cutting off! Place it in the kitchen for a few days to fully ripen. Timing for cutting and eating is critical as a extra day may result in an over ripe brown but still edible pineapple. It's better a day early than a day late. This comes with experience and a little luck. This isn't treated as a tropical pineapple that can be stored and shipped as commercial growers do.

The plant will produce several "pups" which can be separated when they are 6-8 inches tall and potted and grown as new plants. This can go on for years as the plants multiply.

It is a rewarding project that requires patience but well worth the effort to witness the progress of a beautiful and interesting plant and to taste the sweetness of a home-grown pineapple. I usually have 3-4 each year.

Mo sun-Mo water-Mo fertilizer = a 3-4 lb. Pineapple!!!

