Pineapple

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Dark green, lush and exotic, pineapples are easy to grow. And you might even get a fruit!

Pineapple plants look just like the green, leafy top of a pineapple fruit, only bigger. They have dark green, spiky leaves and grow happily on a warm windowsill. Even if you do not have a conservatory or greenhouse, they still make exotic-looking house plants, and are very easy to grow and look after.

If you grow a pineapple plant in a warm, bright conservatory or in a greenhouse, it may produce a pineapple fruit in about 2-3 years. You can buy pineapples all year long from most supermarkets or greengrocers.

How to grow a pineapple

Buy a pineapple with a nice, healthy-looking top (called the crown). It should have no brown leaves and no signs of damage, and the fruit should be fresh and firm to touch.

Carefully cut the top off the pineapple with a sharp knife, leaving about 1cm of flesh on the bottom of the crown. Lay the crown on its side so that the cut is exposed to the air, and allow it to dry off for two days.

Pineapples need a gritty compost, so you will need to make a special mixture. Fill a pot with multi-purpose compost and empty it into a mixing bowl. Fill the same pot about a quarter full with sharp sand, which you can get from a DIY store or garden centre, and empty it into the mixing bowl. Thoroughly mix the compost and the sharp sand together.

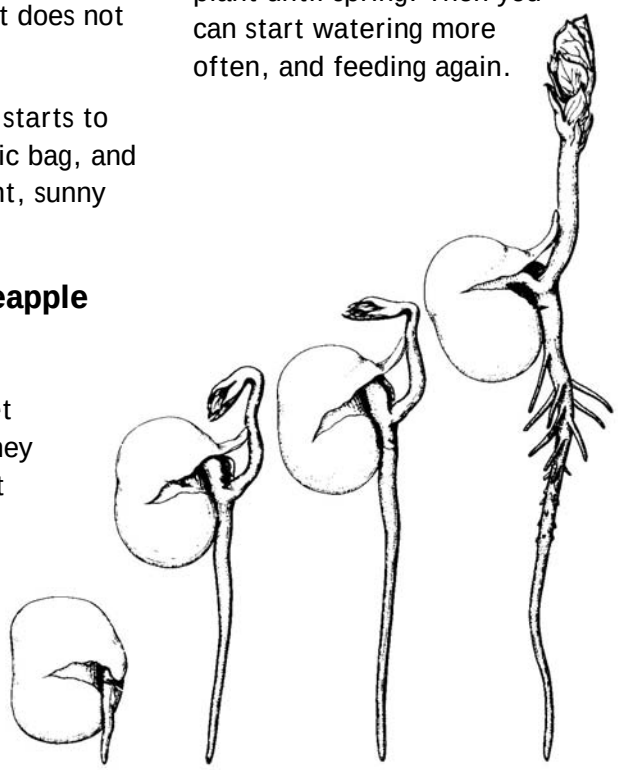
Fill a pot that is large enough for the pineapple crown with the compost mixture, and sit the crown on top. Cover up the pineapple flesh at the base of the crown with a bit more compost. Water well and cover with a clear plastic bag such as a sandwich bag.

Put your pineapple plant on a warm windowsill, out of direct sunlight. Check the compost every day to make sure that it does not dry out.

When the pineapple starts to grow, remove the plastic bag, and put the plant on a bright, sunny windowsill.

Caring for your pineapple plant

It is important not to let pineapples get cold – they usually grow in very hot climates, and are sensitive to chilly conditions.

They should always be grown in a warm room or in a conservatory. As the plant grows, it will occasionally need repotting – but not more than once a year. You must use some more of the special mixture you first planted it in. Pineapples do not like growing in pots that are too big for them. When you repot, use pots no more than 2cm bigger than the last time.

Water the pineapple regularly, and feed it with a general house-plant fertiliser every two weeks in the summer. In the winter, reduce the watering to about once every two weeks, and do not feed your pineapple plant until spring. Then you can start watering more often, and feeding again.