Experimental Banana

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJt3erb4COk

Full English Transcript:

The humble banana – whether you like to eat them when they're yellow, still a bit green or for the weirdos who like them when they're brown, it's hard to imagine not being able to buy one whenever you like.

Yet, back in 1736 almost no one in Europe had ever tasted the sweet deliciousness of a banana. Bananas naturally grow in hot, tropical climates, unlike the milder, rubbish, climates we experience in Europe.

But that was all about to change, I mean, not the climate, but bananas being grown in Europe. Many famous botanists, which are people who study plants, had grown banana plants in Europe before, but none of them had succeeded in getting the plant to flower or produce fruit.

Stories about the precious and delicious banana were told only by travellers who had seen the plant growing in its natural habitat.

Our story begins in 1735 when Carl Linnaeus received an invitation from a wealthy Dutch trader to come to the Netherlands, in Europe. He wanted Linnaeus to write a book that described all the plants that were growing in the gardens of his, rather fetching, summer house in Hartekamp.

In one of the greenhouses there grew a plant that he called a 'pisang', which we just call a banana. With the head gardener's help, Linnaeus set about trying to get the banana plant to flower.

He placed the plant in rich fertile soil, kept it dry and cool for a few weeks, then increased the temperature and gave it plenty of water. In doing so, Linnaeus artificially created the same conditions you would see in tropical climates. Linnaeus achieved what no other botanist in Europe had previously been able to do – in just 6 months, he had coaxed the demanding banana plant into producing fruit.

Linnaeus had essentially done what scientists still do today – he made notes and observations, and used this evidence to build his theory. He studied the attempts of other botanists who had tried to cultivate a banana plant, and noted the conditions under which they failed to grow.

By using all of the evidence in front of him he was able to recreate the conditions in which a banana plant might grow in the wild.

Linnaeus developed his own scientific method for growing the plant. By recording every detail of the banana plant's growth, he was able to then produce a booklet for anyone to use and get the same results.

For this very reason, the Royal Family of Sweden went on to become the first European people to taste the sweet deliciousness of a banana grown in their own country.