



Dates come from the date palm, traditionally propagated from side shoots that grow out from the base of a mature trunk (these days tissue culture techniques are also used). The outer branches are trimmed every year; and as the tree grows these branches are cut higher up until eventually the solid trunk is formed. After three years (or more if the water supply is limited), the date palm will flower in spring; flowers of the female tree must then be hand-pollinated with the panicles (flower-head) from a male tree, of which only very few are planted. Fruits ripen during the summer and harvesting takes place during the hottest period of the year, between late June and early October depending on the type of date palm – there are more than 50 varieties in the UAE alone.

[Originally published in Abu Dhabi Week vol 2 issue 18]