

Gingers are for everyone!

Many gardeners in the Central Florida area steer away from gingers thinking they are too exotic and difficult to grow. While some gingers are cold sensitive and higher maintenance, there are many varieties that do well in this area with little or no care at all. Gingers need some shade, moisture and room to grow and, with a little fertilizer now and then, they do well on their own. Their exotic blooms, many heavy with perfumed fragrance, are a delight in the garden. Many questions are asked by visitors to Leu Gardens about our gingers and disappointment sets in when it is learned they will not grow up north. Common gingers can be obtained at many of the garden stores in the area but if they don't carry specific varieties try mail order nurseries like Stokes Tropicals or Gingerwood Nursery



who can usually provide them. (see next page) Be aware, however, that these may need some protection in the winter.

Plant gingers in moist organic soil in part to full shade. More support will be

given to the plant if it is planted four inches deeper than grown in the pot. Give the taller species lots of room for they tend to spread and form large clumps. Keep them well watered during dry periods as they are not

drought tolerant. Fertilize three to four times a year with a general garden fertilizer. Ginger foliage in this area is tender to cold and the plant may freeze to the ground but will come back out quickly from the rhizomes.

Gingers that will grow well in Central Florida:

Alpinia: Larger evergreen gingers that grow from four to ten feet tall. *Alpinia zerumbet* is one shell ginger that does well here. It flowers in the warmer months and the flowers are shell pink with a bright red and yellow interior. There is a variegated form called 'Variegata' with yellow striped foliage.

Costus: An interesting group of gingers as the leaves are arranged spirally on the stems. Most *Costus* bear brightly colored cone-like flowers in the ends of the stems. *Costus barbatus* called the 'Red Tower Ginger' grows four to six feet tall



and bears a bright red inflorescence with yellow flowers. The undersides of the leaves are softly fuzzy. *Costus speciosus* is known as the 'Crepe Ginger' and it grows four to six feet tall. It bears large crinkly white flowers and there is a variegated form of the same plant with white marked leaves. *Costus spicatus* is the 'Orange Spiral Ginger' and it grows five to six feet tall and bears a bright orange flower.

Curcuma: This group of gingers is deciduous in winter. The foliage emerges in late spring. In some species, the flowers emerge before the foliage in the spring while others bloom in the summer. *Curcumas* grow two to four feet tall and some have colorful markings on the foliage. The flowers appear on stalks separate from the foliage. The flower colors range from white to pink, red or purple. The common name for this group is 'Hidden Gingers'.

Globba: These are known as 'Dancing Girl Gingers'. They are small in size usually one to three feet tall and are deciduous. *Globba bulbifera* is the yellow 'Dancing Girl Ginger' and it bears pendant yellow flowers. *Globba wintii* bears pendant purple flowers but also

has several cultivars that bear white or pink flowers.

Hedychium: This group is evergreen and upright with stems that grow three to seven feet tall. Many bear very fragrant flowers. *Hedychium coronarium* is one of the most common gingers in Central Florida and is known as the 'White Butterfly Ginger'. It grows four to six feet tall and bears white extremely fragrant flowers. *Hedychium gardnerianum* is known as 'Kahili Ginger' and will grow three to five feet tall and bears bright yellow fragrant flowers.

Hedychium coccineum is known as 'Scarlet Ginger' and grows four to eight feet tall with bright orange flowers.

Kaempferia: A group of gingers known as 'Peacock Gingers' make great groundcovers as they only grow one to two feet tall. Many have ornamentally marked foliage and make a good substitute for hosta in Central Florida. They are deciduous and the leaves return in late spring. There are many

cultivars of various species and these gingers are more readily available.

Kaempferia laotica has bright green leaves marked with silver and black and bears white or purple flowers.

Kaempferia pulchra has dark green leaves with bronze or purplish feathery markings and it also bears small pink or purple flowers. *Kaempferia rotunda* is one of the larger species and can grow up to two feet tall. The green leaves have silver markings and are dark purple underneath. The plant bears white and purple flowers.

A related species to *Kaempferia* is *Cornukaempferia*. The most common one in cultivation is

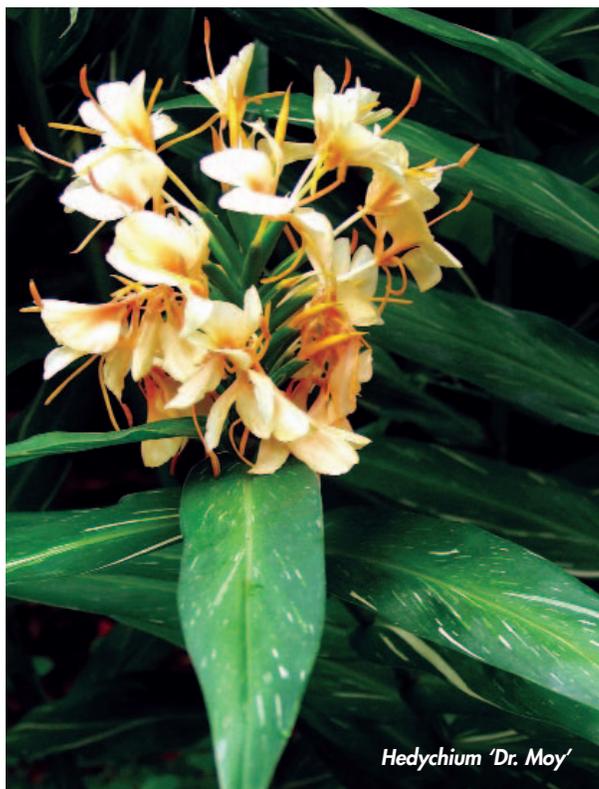
Cornukaempferia aurantiflora 'Jungle Gold'. It has green and purplish bronze marked leaves and bears bright orange flowers during the summer.

Zingiber: This a group with reed-like stems and are deciduous in winter. *Zingiber officinale's* roots are the source of edible ginger. It grows two to three feet tall and bears greenish-white flowers.

Zingiber zerumbet is called the 'Shampoo' or 'Pinecone' ginger. The flowers emerge in late summer on separate stalks from the foliage and are green at first turning to a bright red. They resemble pinecones and release a thick fragrant juice when squeezed. This is used in some shampoos. The



Costus varzeorum



Hedychium 'Dr. Moy'

plant can grow five to six feet tall. There is a variegated form called 'Darceyi' with attractive white striped leaves.

Another plant that is not a ginger but is grouped into the gingers because it is called 'Blue Ginger' is *Dicorisandra thyrsiflora*. The succulent stems grow four to six feet tall and it bears bluish-purple flowers during the warmer months. Unlike gingers, this will grow from stem cuttings.

– Helen BeVier & Eric Schmidt

Ginger Sources:

Gingerwood Nursery, 5855 Bayou Paul Ro., St. Gabriel, LA 70776
www.gingerwoodnursery.com

Stokes Tropicals, 4806 Old Spanish Trail, Jeanerette, LA 70544
www.stokestropicals.com

