

Alpinia purpurata (E. Vieillard) K.M. Schumann

Red Ginger

(*Guillainia purpurata*)

- Red Ginger, also known as Ostrich Plume, Pink Cone Ginger, Purple Ginger, or Red Cone Ginger, produces erect 8" to 15" (rarely 24") long terminal racemes or panicles of flowers with showy pink, red to purple-red bracts, the racemes or panicles may later droop as they elongate; the actual flowers are small, white, and nearly encased in the bracts; the lanceolate 18" to 22" (30") long by 4" to 6" wide glabrous evergreen leaves are medium to dark green, except along the midrib which is lighter in color; leaves resemble miniature versions of banana leaves on slender pseudostems; plants sucker from aromatic rhizomes to form small colonies (3') 4' to 6' tall in cultivation with a slow indefinite spread, but can reach 15' tall in the wild.
- Plants grow well in full sun to partial shade on fertile acidic to neutral soils and are cold hardy in USDA zones 10 (9b) to 11; *Alpinia purpurata* can be grown outdoors in our region only in the most protected locations along the Gulf Coast and in deep South Texas where it may function as a dieback herbaceous perennial depending upon the severity of a given winter; consistent with its native haunts along water courses, Red Ginger requires regular sources of moisture and is not drought tolerant.
- Red Ginger is native to Malaysian and islands in the Southwest Pacific Ocean, but has naturalized extensively in many tropical climates, including Hawaii where it is one of the more frequently encountered gingers both in cultivated landscapes and wild settings; *Alpinia purpurata* is the national flower of Samoa where it is called Teuila; the specific epithet means purple in reference to the bracts; bees and butterflies are attracted to the flowers; the fresh cut flowers work well in floral arrangements; this species is also sometimes grown as a component of high light interiorscapes.

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