**Hedychium coronarium** J.G. König  
Butterfly Ginger

**Other Common Names:** Cinnamon Jasmine, Common Ginger-Lily, Garland-Flower, White Ginger, White Ginger-Lily.

**Family:** Zingiberaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Roots are hardy as far north as USDA zone 7, but shoots need protection in zone 8; plants are usually reliably evergreen in zones 9 through 11.

**Foliage:** Evergreen to semi-evergreen; alternate; simple; lanceolate; 10 to 18 (24) long by 3 to 3½ (4) wide; tips long acuminate; margins entire to undulate; bases rounded and clasping the stem; the venation is pinnate; blades dark glossy green above with the midrib depressed and lighter in color than the blade; duller beneath with scattered whitish hairs present, particularly along the midrib of mature leaves; no fall color develops.

**Flower:** The perfect flowers occur in terminal cluster-like spikes; individual flowers appear to arise from a cone-like structure formed from the tightly overlapping leafy bracts; the 2 to 3 diameter white three-petaled flowers have white sepals that encase the flower, which then peel away and senesce as the three larger petals open; the lower petal is the largest and is bilobed; petals appear waxy and feel rubbery to the touch; the reproductive portions of the flowers are distended; flowers nodding slightly, but borne high enough that this seldom detracts from their effectiveness; the overall appearance of the individual flower resembles a butterfly, hence the common names alluding to butterflies; the flowers are highly scented, reminding one of honeysuckles; bloom occurs any time that temperatures permit; where winters are cool/cold, this is usually late spring to late fall.

**Fruit:** Small three-valved fruit with bright orange arils and dark red seeds.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — smooth; green; coarse; stiffly upright and unbranched; the pithy interior is wrapped in a series of leaf bases; Buds — flower buds large and nearly cone-like in general appearance; vegetative buds beneath or at ground level on the rhizomes; Bark — not applicable.

**Habit:** Butterfly Ginger is a rhizomatous perennial herb maturing at 4 to 6 in height on favorable sites; unbranched stems arise from the ground-level rhizomes, forming an slowly expanding colony of upright to arching stems terminating in flower clusters; the overall texture is medium-coarse to coarse.

**Cultural Requirements:** Partial sun to light shade is ideal, but plants will tolerate considerable shade and even full sun if adequate moisture is available; although plants will tolerate seasonal drought once established, they will be more vigorous and thrifty with regular irrigation; soils should be moist and highly organic for best growth; once established, this species will tolerate more or less boggy conditions; the flowers tend to fade more quickly in full sun and the foliage may become chlorotic if drought stressed under these conditions; periodic renewal pruning and/or division may be necessary to maintain a tidy appearance.

**Pathological Problems:** None appear serious; the leaves are sometimes feed upon by various chewing insects.

**Ornamental Assets:** Bold tropical foliage and a strong vertical habit coupled with highly fragrant and showy white flowers are the primary assets; shade tolerant; tolerant of poor drainage.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Cold hardiness is a limitation, although it is not bad for a Ginger; this species has become invasive in favorable tropical climates, such as Hawaii, Jamaica, and New Zealand, however, this is not apparently a concern in our region.

**Landscape Utilization:** Butterfly Gingers are effective in shade gardens and at woodland edges; they can be blended with a variety of perennial and annual herbs, or serve as a seasonal backdrop for
lower stature plants; this is a good species to use to create a tropical effect in warm temperate regions; branches can be used as cut flowers; individual flowers are sometimes used in leis.

**Other Comments**: One of the tougher more cold tolerant Ginger-Lilies for general landscape use; the flowers are highly scented and may be almost overpowering in cut arrangements; this is one of the few Gingers to survive in the neglected landscape of the Arnold home, high praise for its tenacity.

**Native Habitat**: It is thought to have originated from India and Mayanmar (Burma), but *H. coronarium* has been cultivated for centuries and has naturalized extensively in tropical and subtropical regions of the world.

**Related Taxa**: The Gingers are distant relatives of *Musa* and *Canna*, which can be observed in their foliage structure; there are many interesting species within the genus *Hedychium* J.G. König, Ginger-Lilies, and its relatives that have not been fully explored for our regional landscapes; they hold the most promise for Southeastern portions of our region and the Gulf Coast, but some are adaptable enough for other locales in our region; in addition to the species listed below, other members of the family Zingiberaceae that may be suitable for use in our region include the genus *Alpinia* (see under separate listing).

**Costus pulverulentus** K.B. Presl  
*C. pulverulentus* is a rhizomatous herbaceous evergreen to dieback perennial ginger reaching 5 to 8 feet in height with an indefinite spread; the foliage is coarse textured with 8 to 12 long narrowly elliptic to obovate leaves; flowers are borne in a 3 to 4 terminal cigar-shaped spikes of overlapping orange, orange-red and green bracts; individual flowers emerge at divergent angles from between the bracts one or two at a time and are about 1 inch long; flowering occurs over much of the summer and is showy.

C Fire ants, and presumably other ant species, are attracted to nectar secreted by the flowers; this species grows best in partial shade and rich well drained uniformly moist soils with high levels of organic matter; this species originates from Mexico, Central America, and portions of South America; it is useful in USDA zones 9(8b) to 11.

C Other species of *Costus* occasionally grown in our region include *Costus cuspidatus* (C.G.D.N. von Esenbeck & C.R.P. von Martius) C.A. Maass (Fiery Costus) and *Costus speciosus* (J.G. König) J.E. Smith (Crepe Ginger or Wild Ginger)

**Curcuma elata** W. Roxburgh  
*Curcuma elata* is one of the most cold hardy Gingers available for our region, being useful in USDA zones 8 to 11; it is reported to be grown outdoors as far north as Eastern North Carolina; this species needs a moist, but well drained soil and filtered shade; plants tend to perform poorly in full sun or very dense shade; under limited testing, this species has grown well in the Houston, Beaumont, and College Station areas with proper cultural conditions.

C *Curcuma petiolata* W. Roxburgh (Hidden Ginger or Queen Lily) and *Curcuma roscoeana* N. Wallich (Jewel-Of-Burma, Orange Hidden Ginger) may also be suitable for portions of our region.
**Hedychium coccineum** J.G. König  
**Scarlet Ginger-Lily**  
- Also known as Red Ginger-Lily or Scarlet Butterfly Ginger; this is a bit taller, 4 to 8 inches, Ginger-Lily than *H. coronarium*, and the flower spikes can be spectacular; the cylindrical inflorescence has stack-like ranks of nearly tubular orange to scarlet flowers with showy distended reproductive structures nearly as long as the corolla; flowering occurs in several flushes during the growing season and is effective for several weeks at each flush; the lanceolate leaves are 12 to 18 inches long.  
- Plants are evergreen in mild climates and become dieback herbaceous perennials in colder locations; useful in USDA zones 8 to 11; nice plants can be found in the Houston and Beaumont areas; this species is native to the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains in Myanmar (Burma) and Southern China.  
- *Hedychium flavescens* W. Carey (Yellow Butterfly Ginger, Yellow Ginger) and *Hedychium gardneranum* W. Roscoe (Kahili Ginger) may also be suitable for portions of our region.

**Kaempferia pulchra** H.N. Ridley  
**Peacock Ginger**  
- Also known as Dwarf Ginger-Lily or Peacock Ginger-Lily; this species is the smallest of the Gingers discussed herein, typically staying about 4 to 8 inches (12 inches) tall; plants will slowly form a colony from a tuberous rhizome; acting as a herbaceous perennial in much of its range where it dies back each winter; it blooms in summer, producing a few small pinkish lavender flowers with a tiny white center; only a few basal leaves are produced but they are broadly ovate to nearly orbicular and fan out to cover an area about a foot across; most representative specimens in the trade are selections with silver variegations to the leaves.  
- *Kaempferia pulchra* can be an effective foliar accent in a mixed shade planting or can serve as a small scale seasonal groundcover along shaded paths; it is good in combination with winter bulbs as they can occupy the same space during different seasons; although cold hardy in USDA zones 8 to 11, *K. pulchra* is a bit more particular as to siting than some of the other species discussed herein, requiring filtered light to moderate shade, soils moist in summer, but not too wet in winter, and it grows best on an alkaline soil which is different from most Gingers.  
- *Kaempferia rotunda* L., the Resurrection Lily, Resurrection Ginger, or Tropical Crocus, may also work in portions of our region.


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