

Native Ginger

Alpinia caerulea

Native Ginger, *Alpinia caerulea*, is a particularly attractive Australian native rainforest understory plant that is now popular not only as a garden plant but also as an indoor plant! This hardy perennial is a native of rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests along the east coast of Australia, from Gosford just north of Sydney, all the way to Cape York in tropical far north Queensland.



Native Ginger is related to **edible ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*), also to **cardamom** (*Ammomum* and *Elettaria* species), **turmeric** (*Curcuma*) and **galangal** (*Alpinia galanga*). All belong to the **Zingiberaceae**, a very large family which includes over 1300 species of perennials with well-developed rhizomes from Australia, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Native Ginger produces creamy white flowers which are followed by an abundance of dark blue globular fruits (capsules). In far north Queensland, these are eaten by Cassowaries. An internet search will provide much information about the many ways in which the Native Ginger can be used, however, we advise caution before trying any of these options. The fleshy outer layer of the blue fruit can apparently be eaten but not the seeds. In some areas, it has been said that Aboriginal tracks could be found by following a trail of discarded seeds. The roots and stems apparently have a

ginger flavour and food wrapped in native ginger leaves will take on a gingery flavour during cooking. The fruit, including seeds, can be dried and ground to make a tisane (herbal tea). We have not tried any of these.

Look for Native Ginger, currently in fruit, in the Bush Tucker Garden on the southern side of Building F7B and in the garden on the SW corner of Biology Buildings E8A and E8C.

Take care not to confuse Native Ginger with the invasive weed *Hedychium gardneranum*, a tall growing perennial with fragrant creamy yellow flowers. Don't be tempted by its exquisite fragrance to grow this pest.



Native Ginger, *Alpinia caerulea*, in the Bush Tucker Garden at Macquarie University.

Map modified from Atlas of Living Australia:

http://spatial.ala.org.au/?q=Isid%3Aurn%3Aisid%3AAbiodiversity.org.au%3Aapni.taxon%3A301672&qc=data_hub_uid:dh2

Muhammad Masood, Alison Downing, Kevin Downing & Brian Atwell
Department of Biological Sciences
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