Bitter Ginger

Zingiber zerumbet



Bitter Ginger flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8

Other Names: Pinecone Ginger, Shampoo Ginger, Wild Ginger

Description:

A clump forming perennial with reed-like stems, clad with narrow green leaves; flower stalks emerge in mid to late summer that resemble a pine cone, initially green, but gradually turning red; flower stalks may be shorter than leaf stalks

Ornamental Features

Bitter Ginger features bold spikes of creamy white round flowers with cherry red bracts at the ends of the stems from mid summer to early fall, which emerge from distinctive light green flower buds. Its attractive glossy oval leaves remain forest green in color throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Bitter Ginger is an herbaceous perennial with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other garden plants with finer foliage.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Bitter Ginger is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Herb Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Bitter Ginger will grow to be about 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 5 feet. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Bitter Ginger is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.