

Alpinia caerulea
(Zingiberaceae)

Common name: Native ginger.

Localities: Widespread along watercourses.

Growth form: A rhizomatous species forming dense clumps of soft, thick stems to about 2 m tall.

Foliage: Leaf blades are up to 40 cm long and 10 cm wide, and are borne alternately on either side of the stem.

Flowers and fruit: The inflorescence is borne terminally and is erect. Flowers are about 2.5 cm long and are white, with a purplish lip. The fruit are bright blue and about 1.5 cm in diameter, and remain on the plant for months.

Habitat: Occurs in subtropical rainforest.

Propagation and Management: Most readily propagated from sections of rhizome. Native ginger does best with some shade, although it is fairly hardy.

General: This is not the ginger of commerce, but can be used as a substitute. The blue fruit, with their acidic pulp, are refreshing to suck, and also attract the satin bower bird. The seeds are generally too hot to chew fresh, but have been used in place of cardamom in cooking. Aboriginal people used the leaves to provide a roof for shelter.

