



Kāhili Ginger Information Sheet

Kāhili Ginger

Hedychium gardnerianum, Family Zingiberaceae

Native to India, Himalayan region

Introduced to the Hawaiian Islands as an ornamental plant

Description

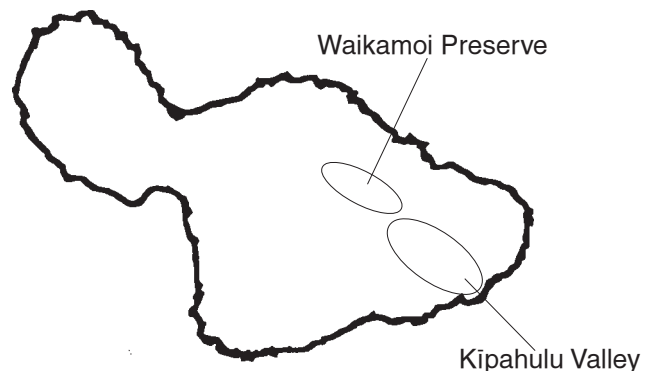
This is a large, showy ginger that can reach heights of up to six feet. It bears large heads of fragrant, bright golden-yellow and red flowers. The flower head turns into a cluster of large, fleshy, bright orange-red fruits. The fruits split open exposing bright red seeds that are very attractive to birds.

Growth Habit

Grows in dense clusters that spread by runners that extend from the base of the plant and sprout new plants

Distribution on East Maui

Kāhili ginger is grown in home gardens and landscape plantings, especially in cool, moist, sunny to partially shaded areas. It also has spread beyond cultivated areas and is now found in protected rain forest areas such as Waikamoi Preserve (managed by The Nature Conservancy) and Kīpahulu Valley (a part of Haleakalā National Park). *Kāhili* ginger is also found in Ko‘olau Gap between 600-900 meters (1968-2932 feet) elevation



and has displaced thousands of acres of native rain forest in the East Maui watershed. (Distribution is not fully known because only small areas of the Haleakalā rain forest are being actively managed and monitored for the presence of ginger.)

How Spread

Kāhili ginger may be intentionally propagated by transplanting “rhizomes” (thickened, underground plant stems that produce shoots above and roots below). Rhizomes that are dug up can also resprout—for example, in compost piles—if they are not dried and thoroughly burned. *Kāhili* ginger can also be dispersed, sometimes long distances, by birds that eat the fruits and excrete the seeds or carry them to other parts of the forest. Fruits of streamside plants can be carried downstream by running water.

Potential Effects on Native Forests

Because of its bird-dispersed seeds, *kāhili* ginger is capable of spreading to remote forests. Once established, this ginger may spread by growth of its rhizome mass. In time, this species may completely dominate the ground cover and shrub layer of invaded forests, replacing the natural understory plants and preventing the growth of young native trees.



What's Your Perspective?

1) Think back to the class activity. Can you identify any perspectives about banning or not banning *kāhili* ginger that were not presented during the activity? If so, what are they?

2) What is *your* perspective on the question your group worked on during class? Here is that question again:

In New Zealand, *kāhili* ginger is a locally common plant often seen along river bottoms and valley floors. This nonnative species has started to appear in New Zealand's native forests and is predicted to pose a significant threat to many of New Zealand's native forest ecosystems, as well as areas recovering from disturbances such as logging. This species forms vast colonies, choking out native vegetation almost completely and preventing growth of new trees, shrubs, and forest floor plants. *Kāhili* ginger may permanently displace rare plants or cause serious losses to populations of uncommon plants and entire natural communities. To guard against this possibility, New Zealand law prohibits the propagation, sale, and distribution of *kāhili* ginger.

Should Hawai'i adopt a similar law? Why or why not?

