

Hedychium coronarium Butterfly Ginger¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

The butterfly ginger is one of the nicest gingers for the home landscape because its fragrance is so enjoyable (Fig. 1). Pure white, showy flowers emerge from one large bud some time in late spring through summer at the tip of each unbranched stem. Each flower lasts about one day. Several hundred flowers can appear from each bud during a 6-week period. Each stem grows to about 5-feet-tall. These herbaceous perennials spread by underground rhizomes, often forming dense clumps of multiple stems. Large, simple leaves are borne on either side of the thick green stems. Unfortunately, individual flowers do not last after they are cut from the plant.



Figure 1. Butterfly ginger.

General Information

Scientific name: *Hedychium coronarium*

Pronunciation: hee-DICK-ee-um kor-oh-NAIR-ee-um

Common name(s): butterfly ginger

Family: *Zinziberaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 4 to 5 feet

Spread: 4 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

1. This document is FPS-240, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: lanceolate; oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Place butterfly ginger near a walk or window so the fragrance can be enjoyed. The foliage texture makes them nicely suited for creating an accent in a shrub border when it is not in flower.

Plants grown in full sun or partial shade flower best. Those in the shade often grow but few flower buds are produced. Rhizomes can be dug any time and divided for propagation.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or disease normally restrict use of this plant in Florida landscapes.