Wild ginger

Hedychium gardnerianum

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Zingiberaceae (ginger)

Also known as
Kahili ginger, ginger lily

Where is it originally from?
Himalayas

What does it look like?
Non-woody, ginger-scented perennial (<2 m tall). Massive, taro-like rhizomes are long, shallow rooted, much-branched, growing over each other close to the ground surface, and form deep beds. Each rhizome segment (4 x 10 cm) usually produces an aerial stem annually. Soft, erect stems (<2 m) are unbranched and thicken to a short pinkish 'collar' at the base. Shiny, slightly hanging leaves (20-45 x 10-15 cm) are alternate. Flowerheads (25-45 cm tall, Jan-Mar) with many fragrant, lemon-yellow flowers with conspicuous red stamens develop into a fruiting spikes with fleshy orange fruits (15-20 mm long) containing many bright scarlet seeds.

Photo: Trevor James

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

Are there any similar species?
H. flavescens, *Canna* species, and *Zingiber spectabile* are similar.

Why is it weedy?
Extremely shade-tolerant, tolerates most soil types, good or poor drainage and fertility, and is drought and frost tolerant once established. Long-lived, fast growing and forms deep rhizome beds. Moderate amount of seed produced that are dispersed widely, and rhizomes resprout from any fragment and can survive immersion in the sea, crushing, and years away from soil.

How does it spread?
Seeds are spread by birds and possibly possums. Rhizomes spread slowly outward from clumps, and new plants are established from rhizome fragments spread in dumped vegetation and fill, and by soil movement, flooding, and contaminated machinery.

What damage does it do?
Dense rhizome beds replace all other species, and are shallow rooted, so when they become heavy with rain they can slip on steep sites and streambanks, causing erosion. Succeeded only by weedy vines.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Most habitats except dry rocky areas: damp forest and margins, streamsides, river systems, shrublands, fernland, and inshore islands. It is frost-tender but grows under canopy in cool forests.

What can I do to get rid of it?
Contact your regional council to determine the status of this species and responsibility for control.
1. Physical removal - Dig or pull out small plants (all year round). Don't compost, leave on site to rot down or hang rhizomes in trees, as they survive indefinitely. Dispose of rhizomes at a refuse transfer station or by drying out and burning or mulching small with a lawn or flail mower.
2. Cut and paste stump (all year round) - Cut above pink 'collar' at base and metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (1g /L) or metsulfuron gel. Leave stems and leaves on site to rot down.
3. Spray (all year round) - Apply metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (5g/10L knapsack) plus organosilicone penetrant as per label recommendation. Note: Overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts. For

dense patches keep spray away from roots of vulnerable plants. Don't replant sprayed sites for 6 months. Do not use over or near water bodies or wetlands and use only as directed on label.
Tip Plants in deep shade produce few or no seed, so begin control on margins to minimise reseeding.
CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Seeds survive for 2-4 years so it is possible to eliminate this plant from sites. Maintain rolling front and check for seedlings annually.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis