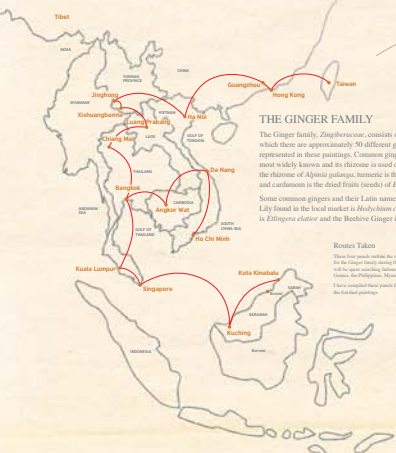


# In Search of Gingers... a work in progress



## THE GINGER FAMILY

The Ginger family, *Zingiberaceae*, consists of over 1500 species within which there are approximately 50 different genera. Some of these are represented in these paintings. Common ginger, *Zingiber officinale*, is the most widely known and its rhizome is used daily in cooking. Galangal is the rhizome of *Alpinia galanga*, turmeric is the rhizome of *Curcuma longa*, and cardamom is the dried fruits (seeds) of *Elettaria cardamomum*.

Some common gingers and their Latin names: the white scented Ginger Lily found in the local market is *Hedyotis coronarium*. The Torch Ginger is *Elingera elatior* and the Beehive Ginger is called *Zingiber spectabile*.

## Routes Taken

These four paths outline the routes I have taken during my search for the Ginger family during the past four years. The next two years will be spent searching between Burma, Papua New Guinea, New Guinea, the Philippines, Myanmar and much more of China.

I have compiled these panels from my travel diaries, notebooks and the finished paintings.

### Hong Kong

The island of Hong Kong is known as one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Despite this, I have been surprised to find that there are still many *Zingiberaceae* growing in the hills around the city. There are many species of *Alpinia* and also *Hedyotis coronarium* which is known as the ginger lily. It is sold principally for its scent although in the past the rhizome has been used as a medicine and the white flowers cooked and eaten with noodles. *Zingiber mioga* is normally found in Japanese dishes and in Chinese cuisine are its tubers are cooked with white noodles. There are just a few of the gingers to be found on the island.

Pollinated by the "Skipper" butterfly *Glyphis polyx*



### Guangzhou

**Guangzhou Botanical Garden**  
On the eastern side of the large sprawling city of Guangzhou (Canton) in the South China Historical Garden. Founded in 1958 on an earlier site, it is the largest in China. A delightful ginger garden has been created here recently. Amongst the lush vegetation of banana, heliconia, canna and alpinia, one is free to wander over delicate ornamental bridges which link these islands of "Ginger". The bridges are in the style of the ancient city of Suzhou.

This is a drawing I made of a herbaceous specimen of *Z. zerumbet* in the Natural History Museum, London. It was collected in the Singapore Bay area of Hong Kong Island in 1994.

### Taiwan

My trip to Taipei coincided with a severe typhoon which made it an unlikely time to search for Gingers. What I did discover was an insight into their character. I found both *Centes dubius* and *Zingiber zerumbet* upright and fresh while all around them lay a twisted, burnt mass of vegetation. One couldn't help but admire their plucky resilience in the face of such destruction.

*Zingiber zerumbet* is commonly known as the champagne ginger. When the bright green bracts of the pineapple-shaped inflorescence (head of the plant) are squeezed, the sticky liquid that comes out is beautifully scented. Small creamy yellow flowers periodically pop from amongst the bracts and then the inflorescence turns crimson with age. In Taiwan it is frequented by butterflies from at least two families, *Euphaedra* (*Euphaedra elicta*) and *Hesperia* (*Hesperia eriphonia*). The Dai people of Yunnan in Southern China use the flowers to hold and use the root as a spice and as a preservative. In other parts, the bracts were infested in water which was used to bathe a new member after childbirth. In Malaysia, Selangor, juice from the rhizome is mixed with purple leaf juice and taken orally. It is still used as a herbal medicine throughout the region and was often planted in coastal regions from which it has now all but disappeared.

### Thailand

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With its borders adjoining the countries of Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia, Thailand is ideal for the Ginger enthusiast. Many of the species growing in these neighbouring countries find their way to Thai markets. There are over 300 species of Gingers growing here, with collections in the Queen Sirikit Botanic Gardens in the North and also in the Nongkhai Tropical Gardens of the South. It is here that one can see many *Centes* species during July and August.

*Alpinia purpurata*

*Zingiber spectabile*

The rhizome of *Alpinia polyantha* is used as Thai cooking

*Elingera elatior* painted 26/12/94 in Thailand during the monsoon

*Hornstedtia tomentosa*