

# *Alpinia zerumbet*

**Common name:** False Cardamom, Shell Ginger, Light galangal, Pink porcelain lily

**Family:** Zingiberaceae

**Habit:** Herb

**Location:** Botanical Garden

**Distribution:** It is native to East Asia.

## **Description:**

Shell ginger is a tall and dramatic landscape or container plant. The leaves are about 2 ft long and 6 in across and strikingly variegated with irregular stripes of green and yellow in some varieties. The habit is upright and does not require staking as do some other members of the ginger family. The flowers are white, tipped in pink, and borne in long pendant arches. In some varieties, there is no pink in the tip. The individual flowers are reminiscent of small seashells, which accounts for the common name "shell ginger". Typically, shell ginger grows to about 6 ft, but it can grow up to 12 ft high.

## **Uses:**

In Manipur, fresh rhizome is applied to ringworms and other skin diseases. Rhizomes are stimulant, carminative; used in rheumatism and bronchial catarrh. The long leaf blades of *A. zerumbet* are used for wrapping *zongzi*, a traditional Chinese dish made of rice stuffed with different fillings. In Okinawa, Japan, its leaves are sold for making an herbal tea and are also used to flavor noodles and wrap *much*i rice cakes. The plant's dried fruits are treated as one of the numerous medicinal spice ingredients in a Chinese soup. Statistically, Okinawan natives who consume a traditional diet that includes *A. zerumbet* have a very longlife expectancy. *A. zerumbet* contains many kavalactones structurally related to the compounds in kava (*Piper methysticum*) and may help prevent high glucose induced cell damage.

