

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Galangal (*Alpinia officinarum*)

Quick Facts

Origin: China (Hainan Island), Java
Description: Herb standing five feet tall, comes from the root
Culinary Uses: Herb, used as a spice in place of ginger in curries or soups
Harvest: Rhizomes, late summer early autumn
Flower: Small, white and streaked with deep-red veining
Cold Tolerance: Frost Tender

General Description: Galangal is a perennial herb, between three to five feet in height, depending on variety. The leaves are 9-14 inches long, relatively narrow blades. The flowers are borne at the top of the plant and are small, white and streaked with deep-red veining. The rhizome resembles ginger in shape but it is much smaller. Some varieties have a dark reddish-brown skin and the interior is nearly white. The rhizomes are tough and difficult to break. It prefers rich, moist soil in a protected, shady position and is drought and frost tender. Frost will damage the leaves but will rarely kill the clump. In a permaculture system it is a useful understory plant.

- **Native Origin:** Galangal is a plant in the ginger family which is mostly cultivated in Southeast Asia. It originated in China, where its name ultimately derives.
- **Harvesting Techniques:** Rhizomes can be harvested most of the year. The rhizomes are tenderer when they are young and actively growing with a white rather than brown skin. It is possible for the average to just dig carefully at the side of a clump and remove rhizomes as needed rather than harvesting the whole clump.



- **Season of Harvest:** Late summer early autumn.
- **Culinary Uses:** The root has been used in Europe as a spice for over a thousand years, it was probably been introduced by Arabian or Greek physicians. The rhizomes have a spicy aroma and a pungent taste somewhere between pepper and ginger, it is often cooked with lemon grass. The rhizomes are used fresh and dried to flavor curries, soup, meat and fish. It is also used in Russia for flavoring vinegar and the liqueur 'nastoika'. The leaves and young shoots are also edible. In India the oil of galangal is valued in perfumery. In addition to being used as a spice in cooking, galangal has been used in Asia and the Middle East in perfumes, snuffs, aphrodisiacs, and as flavors for condiments (including vinegar and beer), in teas in Germany and wines in Russia. Like ginger, galangal has been used for medicinal purposes to treat nausea, flatulence, and dyspepsia.
- **Nutritional Value:** The rhizome (root) of galangal resembles ginger in taste and appearance. One serving of galangal contains 45 calories and 2 g of dietary fiber. It is also a source of sodium, iron, vitamins A and C. It also has some phyto-chemicals such as beta-Sitosterol, Galangin, Emodin and Quercetin.

Galangal
Scientific Classification
Kingdom: Plantae
(unranked): Angiosperms
(unranked): Monocots
(unranked): Commelinids
Order: Zingiberales
Family: Zingiberaceae
Genus: Alpinia
Species: A. galanga

Sources

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