



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Alpinia zerumbet*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This lush, coarse-textured, clumping evergreen is planted for its heavy rosette of arching stems and green leaves arising from a large loose center (Fig. 1). Leaves are typically 12 to 15 inches long and four to five inches wide, arranged in two rows along each unbranched stem. Its attractive shell-like, white or pink fragrant flowers are borne in drooping clusters at the end of the stems. The upright spreading form makes it very suitable as an accent plant growing in a bed of ground cover or toward the front of a shrub border. A wonderful, dense foliage display is created when planted in mass on three to five-foot centers.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Alpinia zerumbet*

**Pronunciation:** al-PIN-ee-uh zair-um-BET

**Common name(s):** Shellflower, Shell Ginger

**Family:** *Zingiberaceae*

**Plant type:** herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; suitable for growing indoors; cut flowers; accent

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

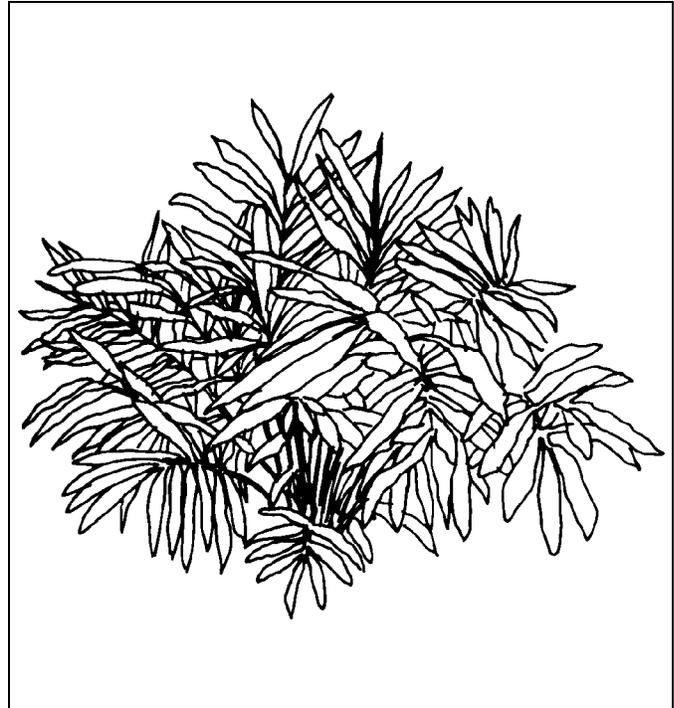


Figure 1. Shellflower.

**Height:** 6 to 9 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

### Description

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-35, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** oblong  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** fragrant  
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** pleasant fragrance; flowers periodically throughout the year

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**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; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

## Other

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## Use and Management

Shell Flower grows moderately fast in fertile, moist soil, doing best in wind-sheltered locations in partial shade to sun. Plants look good and flower with as little as two hours of direct sun. The long, graceful leaves give off a ginger aroma when crushed. Tolerance to wet soil makes it an excellent stream-side plant. But to look its best it should receive irrigation occasionally during dry weather. Freezing temperatures burn leaves. As winter nighttime temperatures dip into the mid 20's, stems are killed to the ground and they resprout slowly in the spring. Temperatures in the low 20's usually will kill the plant.

The clone 'Vittata' has yellow-splotched foliage and is now quite common.

Propagation is by division of the crowded clumps.

Mites can be a minor pest problem.

## Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

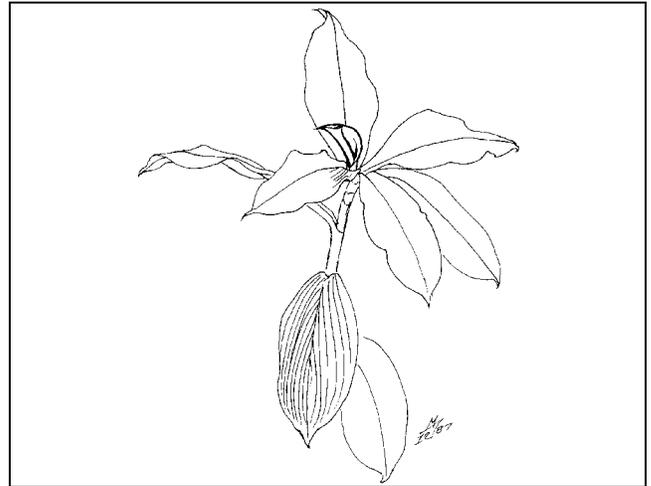


Figure 3. Foliage of Shellflower