

## THE GARDEN PATH

AUGUST 2012

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### PLANT OF THE MONTH FOR AUGUST

By Marty Finkel,

Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener



Hidden Cone Ginger (*Cucurma petiolata*) is quite different from the ginger lily (*Hedychium*) that was Plant of the Month some time ago. They share the same plant family, Zingiberaceae.

*Cucurmas* are perennials hardy to zone 7b (to 0 F) and grow from thick, fleshy, branched rhizomes. Their “stalks” are stems composed of long, succulent, interlocked leaf petioles from which, in the case of *C. petiolata* (Queen ginger) broad, showy, rich green leaves arise, ribbed with parallel pleats! Cannas and bananas have this type of pseudostem. The leaves of other *Cucurma* species also can be solid green, or variegated, or have a red central blotch. The slightly hidden flowers resemble technicolor pine cones due to their arrangement of yellow and white flowers lined with white and pink bracts. Many are grown as cut flowers. The plants go through a dormant period and are slow to emerge in the spring, so mark the spot and you won’t forget they are there. They can range in height from just under 2’ to over 7’ tall, with Queen ginger coming in at 18”-24” tall by 24”-28”



wide. It is ideal for wooded gardens, sheltered foundation plantings, and containers. It needs bright indirect light and fertile, well-drained soil, especially in winter when the dormant rhizomes are prone to rot. They can be divided in fall or spring, but planting in the ground should be in the spring.

### CHECKLIST FOR AUGUST

By Mary Jane Bosworth,

Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

*Earth laughs in flowers. Ralph Waldo Emerson*

- August is the time of greatest stress for container plants. Move them to shaded areas and water them daily.
- Encourage the growth a good root systems by watering thoroughly. Give a thorough soaking to plants and water early in the day so moisture does not remain on leaves to encourage disease growth.
- Transplant Iris and Daylilies.
- Late August and early September is the optimal time to control grubs with soil insecticides. Call for specific chemical recommendations.
- Check garden centers for fall blooming bulbs to add to your garden.
- Take soil samples now. Avoid the spring rush.

### GARDEN TO DO – AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

By Carl Shafer,

Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

#### For August:

Strawberries set fruit buds for next spring in the fall, so now is the time to fertilize with a complete fertilizer like 10-10-10, unless you have a recent soil test to follow. Water if the ground is dry.

Blueberries are also setting fruit buds in the fall. If you have not been fertilizing earlier in the year, do so now and keep plants watered.

The week of September 1<sup>st</sup> is the recommended time to spray for peachtree borers. Get prepared now. Spray the trunk and major branches, paying particular attention to ground level. Follow label instructions. Note some products will recommend multiple applications. Peachtree borers may also attack apricot, cherry, nectarine, and plum trees. For more information on peachtree borers with a link to a list of "Homeowner Products Listed for Borers" see: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/notes141/notes141.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/notes141/notes141.html).

Clean up spent crops in the garden and plant your fall garden. Pick up Horticulture Information Leaflet 8001, *Growing A Fall Vegetable Garden*: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8001.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8001.html). Also see: <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-334/426-334.pdf>, [www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/pdf/hgic1256.pdf](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/pdf/hgic1256.pdf). If you are interested in extending your vegetable gardening season, see: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/SeasonExtensionOctober2005a.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/SeasonExtensionOctober2005a.pdf) or [www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-381/426-381.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-381/426-381.pdf) or <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/hortihints/0402c.html> or Coleman, Eliot. *Four-Season Harvest*. White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green, 1999. Also see: <http://wimastergardener.org/sites/wimastergardener.org/files/FloatingRowCover.pdf>.

If you are not planting a fall garden or if you have extra unused space, plant a cover crop. Also check above fall garden web sites and below.

Note that NCOrganic ([www.ncorganic.org](http://www.ncorganic.org)) in the Organic Production section has individual sections on: Production Guides, General Organic Growing Resources, Pests & Disease Control, Season Extension and Greenhouse, Cover Crops, and Sources of Organic Seed and Organic

## Farming Supplies.

If you have areas in your garden that do not produce well, take soil samples of those areas and areas that produce well for comparison to determine if it is a soil problem.

Make notes of successes and failures in the garden this year so that as you plan next year's garden you can remember what to change and what to expand on. Note any diseases that require treatment before symptoms appear, so that you can take preventive measures next year.

### **For September:**

Prune out fire blight killed wood from apples, pears, and pyracantha if you have not already done so. Be sure to check crab apples and Bradford pears also. If you wait until winter it will be more difficult to determine the dead wood.

Continue to remove spent crops and plant cool weather fall crops, cover crops or cover the bare ground with a layer of mulch that can be tilled under in the spring. It is too late for beans, cucumbers, and squash unless you use robust frost protection (ie Row covers with tunnels or hoop houses.). You can try cool weather cole plants, but they should have been set out in late July or August. Cool weather seeded crops include: kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, spinach, and turnips. See August above, for more details and web links.

Carefully monitor your fall crops for insects. Use appropriate insecticides. For cabbage worms, try *Bacillus thuringiensis*, esfenvalerate or spinosad. Summer oils and soaps can be used for aphids and other soft-bodied insects.

In the later part of the month, clip new blossoms off tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants so that the last fruits can better mature quicker.

Late fall or early winter is the best time to plant trees and shrubs. If you are planning to start or expand tree and nut plantings, you should check local plant nurseries and/or online/mail order

sources to have plants when needed. Small fruits are usually planted in the spring.

### INTERESTING TID-BIT

By Marty Finkel,  
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

The spice turmeric comes from the dried rhizomes of a hidden cone ginger, *Cucurma longa* (see this month's Plant of the Month for *Cucurma petiolata*, or queen ginger). In general, *Cucurma* rhizomes have been cultivated for more than 4,000 years as a source of food, spice, and medicine. Cucurmas have many uses -- many species are grown as cut flowers, and oils are used in making perfume. These food storage rhizomes in the family Zingiberaceae have a gingery or lemony scent. Cucurmas are native to Southeast Asia and are hardy in Zone 7b.

### HERB OF THE MONTH

By Edna Lovelace Gaston,  
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener



Lemon Grass - *Cymbopogon citratus*

**Height:** up to 6 ft.

**Flowers:** greenish flowers appearing during the summer (never noticed flowers on mine but will look more closely)

**Propagation:** division

**Growing conditions:** full sun, very tender – moved into the greenhouse over winter

**Cultivation:** moist soil, rarely fertilized

Lemon Grass is easy to grow, very attractive and a staple in Indian cuisine. As the name implies it has a very tangy lemon flavor, similar to other

lemon-scented plants such as Lemon Thyme, Lemon Verbena or Lemon Balm. But its appearance is quite different from these and most other herbs. It is a tall perennial with a grass-like appearance. Leaves can be infused for tea, oils have be used as a skin cleanser, in bathwater, perfume and soaps.

As I mentioned last month this plant is another one that can be difficult to find but well worth the effort to locate. I have a large plant and would be willing to divide. Enjoy!

#### Additional Information:

- [The Complete Book of Herbs](#). Lesley Bremness. Viking Studio Books, New York, NY, 1988.

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***Pictures courtesy of Edna Gaston and JC Raulston Arboretum***