
Costus erythrophyllus

Scientific Name

Costus erythrophyllus Loes.

Synonyms

Costus claviger Benoist

Family

Costaceae

Common/English Names

Blood Red Spiral Costus, Oxblood Ginger, Violet Spiral Flag

Vernacular Names

German: Rotblättriger Spiralingwer, Rotblättriger Zieringwer

Origin/Distribution

The species is a native of Amazonian Peru and Ecuador.

Agroecology

The plant thrives in a tropical/subtropical climate. It grows in a humus-rich, well-drained, friable, moist soil in partial or fully shaded position.

Edible Plant Parts and Uses

The flowers have been reported edible (Carle 1995; King 2007).

Botany

An unbranched rhizomatous perennial 0.3–1 m with leaves spirally disposed and mostly crowded at the apex, shortly petiolated, glabrous, obovate-oblong, 1.5–2.5 dm by 5.5–10 cm, upper surface green, lower surface burgundy, glabrous to sparsely puberulous, base cuneate, apex acute to acuminate, margin entire (Plates 1 and 2). Sheath is green glabrous with deeply 2 unequally lobed ligule. Inflorescence a sub-capitate spike, terminal on leafy shoot arising from the rhizome, all bracts dark red, broadly ovate with reflexed apices and foliaceous, green appendages, 2.5–6 cm by 2–4 cm, triangular ovate, foliaceous, bracteole red, puberulous. Flower calyx with red deltoid lobes, puberulous, corolla white glabrous tubular, labellum arched, spreading, middle lobe trilobulate,



Plate 1 Leaves with distinct green upper and burgundy lower surfaces



Plate 2 Flowers with red, yellow and white streaks and blotches

broadly ovate, white with central yellow zone, reddish streaks, 6–6.5 cm, stamen 4–5 cm long, with pinkish white anther, 9–10 mm long (Plate 2).

Nutritive/Medicinal Properties

No information has been published on the plant nutritive or medicinal properties.

Costus is traditionally used in Guinean, Brazilian and Trinidadian traditional medicine for various uses, as well as in the Dominican Republic and the United States for diabetes.

Other Uses

A popular ornamental plant for parks, gardens and house gardens.

Comments

The plant is propagated by division of the rhizome.

Selected References

- Carle A (1995) *Costus* flowers – a new delicacy? *Heliconia Soc Int Bull* 7(4):1–2
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- Maas PJM (1972) *Costoideae* (Zingiberaceae). *Flora Neotropica Monogr* 8:1–140
- Maas PJM (1977) *Renealmia* (Zingiberoideae) and *Costoideae* additions (Zingiberaceae). *Flora Neotropica Monogr* 18:1–218
- Macbride JF (1936) Zingiberaceae, flora of Peru. *Publ Field Mus Nat Hist Bot Ser* 13(1/3):726–738