

and the green leaves, stem and root broken off. Wild ginger for fresh marketing can be harvested mechanically with a potato filter. For mechanical harvesting the leaves of the plants may be chopped off beforehand with a rotary cutter and the green stubble then removed manually after harvesting.

Acknowledgement

The Directorate Agricultural Information Services and the ARC—Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops—are herewith acknowledged.

References

- <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Conservation/003~Weeds/Wild-Ginger.asp>
<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Conservation/003~Weeds/Wild-Ginger.asp>
<http://altnature.com/gallery/wild-ginger.htm> <http://www.plantzaf-rica.com/plantqrs/siphonaeth.htm>

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Wild ginger



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Scientific name: *Siphonochilus aethiopicus*

Common names: Natal ginger, wild ginger (English); wildegemmer (Afrikaans); Indungulo, Isiphetho (isiZulu)

Background

Wild ginger is a herbaceous perennial plant of the forest floor. This means that its lifespan extends over 2 years and it does not accumulate woody tissue. Wild ginger belongs to the family Zingiberaceae. Wild ginger is native to southern tropical Africa (south of Malawi to the eastern part of South Africa) and in South Africa, it is distributed in Mpumalanga and Limpopo (extinct in KwaZulu-Natal).

Climatic and soil requirements

Wild ginger prefers high temperatures. A soil temperature of between 20 and 22 °C and air temperature of around 20 °C are suitable. It grows best in a well-drained, red and yellowish-brown soil rich in organic matter. It also prefers a clay content of between 15 and 50 %. The best soil pH for wild ginger is 6,0 to 7,0.

Uses

Wild ginger is used for medicinal purposes to treat malaria, oral and vaginal thrush, headache and chest ailments. It is chewed for colds, asthma, hysteria and coughs. It can also be used in food for human consumption (meat stews and salads) and forest revegetation.

Cultural practices

Soil preparation

The soil should be tilled to at least 15 cm depth and all grasses must be removed. To obtain a suitable seedbed the soil should be tilled 1 or 2 times.

Planting

Spring or summer is the ideal time for planting wild ginger. Seeds should be planted in 2 or 3 furrows, approximately 15 cm deep into the soil with a spacing of 18 cm apart and 72 cm between the rows.

Propagation

Wild ginger is propagated by seed, rhizomes or tissue culture. The rhizomes should be broken into smaller pieces. Propagation of rhizomes can be done in spring. Tissue culture is the most efficient means of propagating wild ginger.

Fertilisation

During the growing season the plants respond very well to high levels of feeding with organic matter. A light application of organic fertiliser (e.g. N, P and K) should be made. A great quantity of phosphorus is required in the early stages of plant development. Organic growers can use bonemeal, fishmeal or other sources of phosphate.

Irrigation

Wild ginger has a high water requirement. Irrigation should be reduced to a minimum during the winter months, while the plant is dormant and may be resumed with the onset of spring.

Weed control

Mulching of wild ginger with sawdust or woodchips, pine or hardwood bark can reduce weed growth. Pre-emergence herbicides can also be used to control weeds before seed germination. Herbicides must be applied yearly until the groundcover establishes and shades out weeds.

Disease control

The most frequent diseases in wild ginger include: damping off, powdery mildew, rust and leaf spot.

The control measures to be taken are:

- Sanitation, e.g. weed-free and disease-free planting materials
- Avoiding overwatering
- Chemical control—use of registered pesticides

Pest control

The major insects and pest identified in wild ginger include nematodes, aphids, caterpillars, leafminer, leaf spots and mites.

The control measures to be taken are:

- Cultural control—sanitation—destruction of heavily infested plant stock, pruning, raking of leaves
- Using resistant varieties

Harvesting methods

The harvesting method of wild ginger is determined by the purpose for which the plant is grown. Wild ginger for preserving in syrup is harvested by digging it up and removing all the roots from about 10 cm below the crown or it can be lifted by hand