

Cardamom

Elettaria cardamomum

Cardamom is a tropical, perennial spice in the ginger family that forms huge 12' clumps of bold-textured foliage. The seeds are used to flavor and add aroma to coffee, candies, pastries, and other foods. Cardamom requires part shade, consistently moist conditions, and slightly acidic soil. Cardamom is best grown in south Florida in zones 10 and 11 where it will not be injured by cold. The plant dies back to the ground at 50°F and will not flower or set seed the following year. Small yellowish flowers are produced near the ground, which then form oblong ribbed seed capsules. These are harvested when green and then dried in the sun until they turn brown and split open. Flowers and fruit will appear only when grown outdoors under tropical rainforest conditions, and with frequent natural misting. Plants will not bloom when grown indoors. Attracts bees and pollinators.

Type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10b through 13a

Uses: container; houseplant; naturalized area; riparian; woodland

Origin: not native to Florida

Height: 6 to 15 feet

Spread: 4 to 10 feet

Plant spacing: 6 to 12 feet

Light requirement: part shade to full shade

Soil tolerances: slightly acidic; moist to occasionally wet

Drought tolerance: low

Soil salt tolerances: low

Invasive potential: low

Pest resistance: no serious pests or diseases

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Photos: NC Extension