
Wild Ginger (*Asarum caudatum*)

Birthwort Family

Why Choose It?

Native Wild Ginger is an elegant ground cover, with bold, deep green, heart-shaped leaves, but you get more than good looks from this plant's foliage. Check under the leaves in spring for the charming, three-cornered flowers with little "tails", and then crush a leaf or two for the spicy ginger-like fragrance.



Photo: Ben Legler

In the Garden

This plant is the perfect evergreen ground cover to grow beneath large shrubs and trees. Spreading by rhizomes to 18 inches wide or more, the distinctive, dark green foliage combines well with other shade loving, woodland natives such as Trillium, Foam Flower, and ferns.

The Facts

Wild Ginger forms dense mats of evergreen leaves, growing only 6-8 inches high and about 12-18 inches wide. It is a real shade lover and will appreciate a loose woodland type soil with lots of leaf mold. Wild Ginger will tolerate our dry summers very well, and is a great candidate for that area of dry shade in the garden, but in long hot stretches a little extra summer water will keep it looking fresh. This plant may be somewhat slow to establish, but it is definitely worth the wait. In late winter or early spring, look carefully under the leaves for the small, whimsical looking, purplish flowers with their curly-tail extensions.

Where to See It

Native from British Columbia to Northern California, mainly from the Cascades to the coast, you can find it carpeting the forest floor under large conifers.

And why is it called Ginger if it's no relation?

If you crush the roots and leaves of our native Wild Ginger they will produce a spicy-citrusy scent that resembles the tropical ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) used in cooking.



Photo: Ben Legler

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

www.wnps.org



Washington Native Plant Society

Native Plant Spotlights

Adapted from writing by Cynthia Spurgeon

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