

Workshop Report: Wild Gingers (*Hedychium* spp.)

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The *Hedychium* J. Koenig spp. workshop, chaired by Djami Djeddour from CABI-UK, aimed to update interested parties on the biocontrol research carried out on these weed targets to date and highlight opportunities to grow the current consortium ahead of the presentation on the topic.

The three most invasive species, *H. gardnerianum* Shepard ex Ker Gawl. (Kahila garland-lily or Kahili ginger), *H. flavescens* Carey ex Roscoe (awapuhi meleleme; yellow ginger or cream garland-lily) and *H. coronarium* J. Koenig (‘awapuhi-ke’oke’o; gingerlily; white ginger; white garland-lily or butterfly ginger) have been the focus of an ongoing biocontrol initiative since 2008. Working in collaboration with national Indian institutes, permission to export natural enemies from the country of origin (East Indian Himalayas) were only acquired at the end of 2010 after a protracted bureaucratic process. A number of highly promising insect and pathogenic agents, including a highly specific stem mining fly (*Merochlorops dimorphus* Cherian) and a *Puccinia* rust, both on *H. gardnerianum*, have been identified and rearing studies/host range testing has been underway in the UK with a number of species for the current sponsorship consortium, The Nature Conservancy, Hawaii and Landcare Research, New Zealand.

The workshop was also intended to investigate ways in which the project could be tailored to meet the needs of other stakeholders, since the project has been run on minimal funds year to year. Whilst great potential has been identified, it is recognised that in order to progress the research, a greater financial investment needs to be made. *Hedychium gardnerianum* is a major threat to many subtropical forest regions of the world e.g. in South Africa, the Macaronesian Archipelagos (Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands) where it threatens endemic “Laurisilva” forests, La Réunion and Australia. In Hawaii, large areas of native rainforests are invaded and *H. gardnerianum*’s common name, Kahili ginger, named for the flower’s resemblance to the Royal feathered standards, exacerbates the mistaken perception that this is a beautiful, harmless, culturally entrenched Hawaiian plant.

Identifying potential opportunities to grow the consortium was at the heart of discussions and representatives from Hawaii’s Department of Land and Natural Resources, The Nature conservancy, Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species and Department of Agriculture as well as scientists from Landcare Research New Zealand and Agricultural Research Council in South Africa (PPRI) attended to provide their insight into the spread of the weeds, public perceptions of the problem and offer advice on likely test plant list requirements, particularly in the light of possible conflicts of interest a biological release may face from the public and horticultural trade in Hawaii. The general consensus was that in areas of dense monocultures, chemical and mechanical control are neither feasible nor environmentally sound and that in Hawaii management is largely confined to outlier populations to try to prevent further recruitment and spread. It was agreed that public awareness campaigns and highlighting the negative impacts that these plants have on all the Hawaiian Islands should be a concerted mission and pre-emptive strategy to any biocontrol release. Details of the project have been forwarded to all those in attendance to take forward to potential sponsors.

Please contact d.djeddour@cabi.org if you would like any more information on the project and/or are interested in becoming a partner or funder.