Common Name: Red Tower Ginger  
Scientific Name: *Costus comosus var. bakeri* (K.Schum.) Maas  
Family: Costaceae  
Genus: *Costus* – spiral-flag, Latin for imported aromatic root  
Species: *comosus* - bearing hairs on leaves  

**Distribution**  
Southern Mexico to Ecuador including Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and Colombia.  

**Native Habitat**  
Wooded slopes between 600 and 1300 meters often on soils of volcanic origin.  

**Description**  
A large clump forming perennial that produces long canes up to 2 m tall from an underground rhizome. New canes have a spiraling habit and leaves are arranged spirally along the stem. Leaves are large, mid-green and have downy hairs on the under surface that are soft to touch.  

**Flowers**  
Bright yellow tubular flowers emerge from large showy terminal clusters of red bracts with leaf like appendages.  

**Location in Garden**  
Various locations including: Next to the Visitor Centre, Spring Walk (beds 30 & 31), Tropical Garden.

**Information**  
This variety is often misnamed in horticulture as *Costus barbatus*, a critically endangered species from Costa Rica. It does not have the leave-like appendages on the red floral bracts like *Costus comosus var. bakeri*.  

*Costus* is the largest and most diverse member of the Costaceae family comprising over 80 species, including one in Australia, *Costus dubius*. The large red terminal bracts of *Costus comosus var. bakeri* attract birds who see clearly in the red colour spectrum. The nectar rich tubular yellow flowers with a small opening only allow small birds with long beaks to access the nectar. In the Americas, these birds are often hummingbirds such as the Magnificent Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*) pictured. These species don’t occur in our Garden but you may see Noisy or Indian Miner birds visiting the flowers of Red Tower Ginger in search of nectar. They often pull the flowers of plants and access the nectar from the base of the fallen flower.  

*Costus comosus var. bakeri* is a hardy perennial for subtropical and sheltered warm temperate gardens, where it performs best with morning sun, well composted soil and regular watering. Remove canes to ground level after flowering.