



Bird of Paradise grows in our environment.

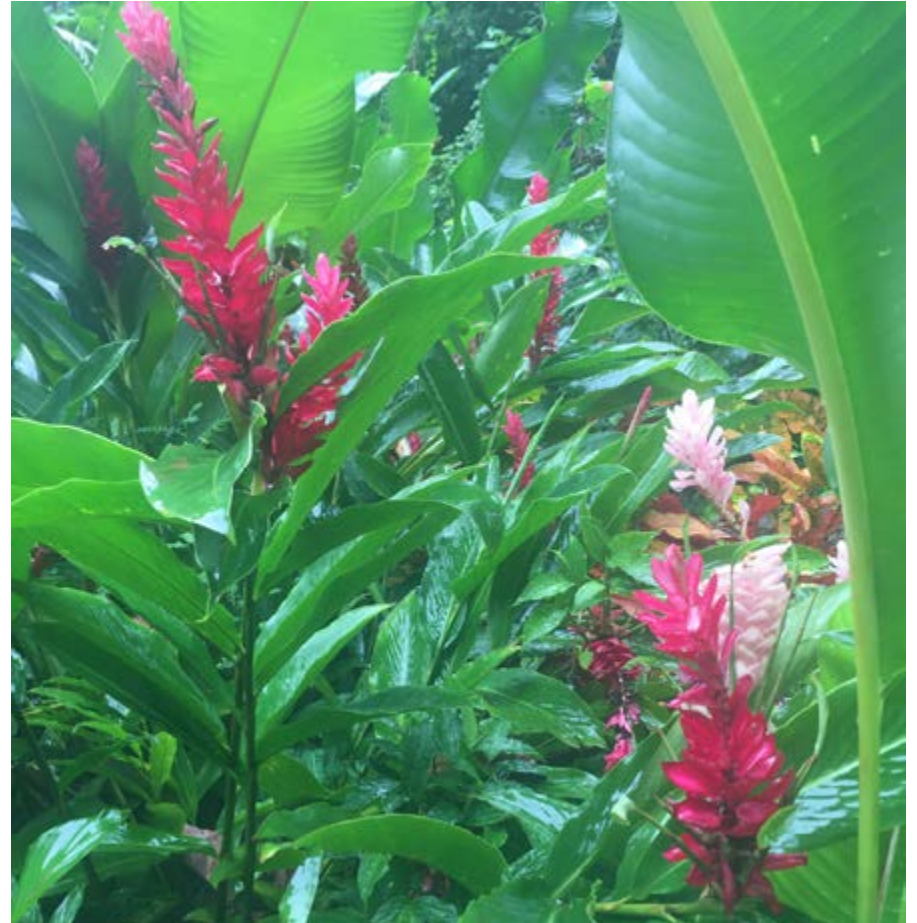
Now that the chilly days and colder nights have halted any successful outdoor planting project, it's time to bring a festive and healthy touch to your indoor décor with living tropicals. The plants from the rain forest will remove toxins, improve the air quality, and add beauty as colorful accents since during winter months when more time is spent inside. On the larger specimens like the fiddle leaf fig, you can wrap Christmas lights and sprinkle ornaments, pinecones, garlands or toppers to celebrate the season.

Staying healthy this season:

Gearing up for holiday meals may cause you to think of your waistline, but by considering the nutritional values of the foods, you'll be able to devour with delight.

Roasting butternut squash brings out its natural sweetness. It can be paired with garlic, rosemary, cumin, coriander seeds and peppers for a healthy savory dish or, for a sweeter rendition, add nutmeg and cinnamon. (In St. Lucia, every time I asked a waiter what made a particular dish so delicious, the answer would be "the secret ingredient is nutmeg!" I came home with the nuts to grate.) Squash is a no-cholesterol fruit packed with fiber and is a major source of vitamin A, providing benefits for your heart, eyes and skin.

If you grew garlic, leeks and onions this year, you are enjoying the cancer-fighting properties of the chopping, smashing and dicing. These tasty



Ginger plants in a variety of colors.

alliums contain prebiotics (not to be confused with probiotics) that keep friendly bacteria in your intestines, help you absorb calcium, ward off colds, flu and heart disease, while lowering blood pressure. Add fresh garlic to your salads and sides for an extra health boost.

Beans are nutritional powerhouses loaded with vitamin K for bone health, fiber for digestion, folate for energy and magnesium for brains. Eat fresh green beans (never canned, unless you canned your fresh produce) and you'll be fired up with antioxidants.

Sweet potatoes are very easy to grow and just one cup fulfills your daily ration of vitamin A necessary for vision and bone growth. If you are concerned about combating wrinkles, the vitamins in sweet potatoes decrease creases while hydrating and repairing your skin.

Eat your spuds cold because when potatoes are cooked and cooled, they release "resistant starch", a fiber that actually aids in burning fat.

The antioxidants in red wine decrease heart disease and protect against cancer. Share a bottle of Lamorinda wine at your holiday feast to extend your life and your relationships!

Pumpkin pie is not only delicious. It is good for your complexion with its commanding antioxidants. One slice delivers four grams of fiber. Go ahead and have a second slice.

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