

Comparison of similar looking plants

Edible plants, Herbs and Spices (I) –

Boesenbergia rotunda (Chinese Keys) and *Curcuma longa*
(Turmeric)



Boesenbergia rotunda and *Curcuma longa*

Scientific Name: *Boesenbergia rotunda*

Common Name: Finger root

Family: Zingiberaceae (Ginger Family)



Boesenbergia rotunda:

This species usually grows no taller than 40cm in height, and can form dense clumps. The leaves are oval – oblong in shape, 12-50cm long x 5-17cm wide.



Boesenbergia rotunda:

Rhizomes are dull brown in color, with numerous long, finger like storage roots. Rhizomes are pale- dull yellow in cross section.

Scientific Name: *Curcuma longa*

Common Name: Turmeric

Family: Zingiberaceae (Ginger Family)



Curcuma longa:

This is a much taller plant with elliptic, or oblong lanceolate leaves up to 70cm in length.

The leaves and rhizomes are used in cooking, and ground turmeric (powder) is often used as a spice or as food coloring.



Curcuma longa:

Rhizomes are usually sold as 'Fingers' – these are the smaller, ellipsoid growths from the primary rhizome. Rhizomes are dull – dark orange in cross section.

Boesenbergia rotunda and *Curcuma longa*



Boesenbergia rotunda:

The inflorescence is almost completely hidden by the leafy shoots, and the pink flowers appear to emerge from the center of the leafy shoots



Curcuma longa:

The large and conspicuous inflorescence emerges between the leaves, and is made up of many bracts. The upper bracts are white streaked or tipped with green, whereas the lower bracts are greenish white. The pale yellow flowers emerge from the pouch like, lower bracts.

Photo credits:

Flowering plant, Inflorescence and flowers of *Curcuma longa* – Lim YaoHui