

MEDIA RELEASE

New species of begonia discovered in Indonesia

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Researchers have discovered a new species of begonia in Indonesia, on Seram Island, the main island of the Moluccas. The rare, newly-described species, believed to be endemic to the island of Seram, was discovered during an expedition to Manusela National Park.

Lead researcher Erosi Undaharta from the Bali Botanic Garden, who took part in the expedition, said: "we had to traverse steep cliffs and follow a river system, documenting a variety of plant species in the forest before we finally found this begonia".

"The species has been named *Begonia nephrophylla*, from the ancient Greek word nephros meaning kidney and phyllus meaning leaf, referring to the shape of the leaf which resembles a kidney" said Ms Undaharta.

These latest findings were part of a collaboration with researchers from the Bali Botanic Garden, led by Erosi Undaharta and co-author Wisnu Ardi from the Bogor Botanic Garden, in consultation with foreign experts. This new research has just been published in the peer-reviewed Journal, the Gardens' Bulletin Singapore.

According to Ms Undaharta, *Begonia nephrophylla* may only exist in Manusela National Park where it grows in lowland rain forest close to rivers. "The new species can be easily distinguished from other begonia species by its moderately dense layer of fleshy, red scales on the stems" she said.

"With the discovery of this species, nine species of begonia have now been identified in the Moluccas, seven of which are endemic" explained Ms Undaharta.

"*Begonia nephrophylla* has the potential as an ornamental plant, suitable for both indoor and outdoor display and could in the future be used as a parent plant for further hybridization."

According to Ms Undaharta, there is still much to learn about the diversity of plant species in the Moluccas. "Our botanic knowledge is very limited in this region. I think it is still very likely that we will discover more new species there in the near future" she said.

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The latest research has been published in the peer-reviewed journal [Gardens' Bulletin Singapore](#). The full paper is available online here. <http://bit.ly/2fEobkv>

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