

Book Review: Hughes, M. 2008. **An Annotated Checklist of Southeast Asian *Begonia***. Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. 164 pp. Price: Sing \$60 (£25).

This useful and informative publication aims to stimulate, as stated by the author, the production of much needed local floras of *Begonia* through the provision of a regional checklist with extensive bibliography.

The main body of the publication consists of a short and information-rich Introduction, followed by a lengthy section of Annotated Species List and a Geographic List, and ended with the References and Index of Names.

According to the author, the main annotated list accounts for 521 species of *Begonias* reported from 18 Botanical Countries (see Brummit, 2001) in SE Asia based on some 5,827 specimens housed in various herbaria. The political countries included in this checklist include Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific Island groups, Vanuatu and Fiji. Surprisingly, based on current information, Philippines has the highest number of species recorded (104 species) and also the greatest number of endemic species reported (103 species). This is followed by Borneo (95 species) and New Guinea (79 species). The high number of species of *Begonias* in the Philippines probably reflects more on the long historically preference and frequency of collections of this genus in the country.

For every species listed in this publication, sufficient information is provided for the original publication and important taxonomic bibliography, the complete synonymy, the type information, the sectional classification, the enumeration of specimens reported in publications and where deposited today, and most importantly, the author's proposed IUCN status of the species endangerment. According to the author, readers of the publication can also find the digital images of the plant and the protologues of each species by consulting the website of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

The species names in the main annotated list are arranged alphabetically for ease of searching. Likewise, the names of the taxa placed under a country in the Geographic List are also alphabetically listed, but with additional listing of excluded taxa from the country/island groups based on the author's many years of taxonomic and nomenclatural researches.

Some nomenclatural novelties published in this checklist include *Begonia cristata* Warb. ex L.B.Sm. & Wassh. (*syn. nov.*, p. 7), *Begonia yunnanensis* H. Lévl. (*syn. nov.*, p. 83), *B. sootepensis* var. *thorelii* Gagnep. (*syn. nov.*, p. 83), *B. lushaiensis* C.E.C. Fish. (*syn. nov.*, p. 83), *Casparya robusta* var. *glabriuscula* A. DC. (*syn. nov.*, p. 86), and *B. modestiflora* var. *sootepensis* (Craib) Z. Badcock ex M. Hughes, *comb. nov.* (p. 84).

Additionally, two species of *Begonia*, *B. kaniensis* Irmsch. and *B.*

demissa Craib, are beautifully illustrated.

What I find most elucidating and informative about this publication is the many comments of the author provided for many species throughout the publication as Notes to explain the confusing history of a name, the past errors made in reporting a species, the author's taxonomic interpretation, the alleged and corrected range information, as well as the justification of revised sectional classification. All these notes show the profound knowledge of the author for the genus, taxonomically, nomenclaturally and bibliographically.

Having been involved in the study of the flora of the Philippine Archipelago for many years, I did find a few small errors in the spelling of locality and the collector names that deal with the Philippine taxa. For examples, the collector name of "Edaño" has been written inaccurately as "Edano", and the town name, "Peñablanca" in Cagayan Province is misspelled as "Panablanca". Moreso, the locality name of Mt. Makiling is the same as Mt. Maquiling, and Mt. Banahao is the same as Mt. Banajao. Mt. Susong-Dalaga (female breast) in Rizal Province (see p. 37) is misspelled as Mt. Susong-Dalanga. "Baranguay San Jose" on p. 26, the type locality under *B. chloroneura* P. Wilkie & Sands, should be written as "Barangay San Jose". The type locality of *B. longibractea* Merr. (see p. 72) is Siargao Island, and not Siargo Island as printed. Also, the type locality of *Begonia subtruncata* Merr. in Union Province (see p. 125) is today known as "La Union Province". Likewise, the type locality, "Banos" town, of *B. aequata* A. Gray in Laguna Province (p. 4), is to be "Los Baños" town.

I have two nomenclatural points to make. (1) The listing of the accepted name for the homotypic synonymy between *Begonia wenzelii* Merr. (1915) and *B. leytenensis* Merr. (1914), in favour of the former (p. 138), is not clearly stated. The latter name is actually a junior homonym of *B. leytenensis* Elm. (2) Naked names, like *B. bulusanensis* Elmer ex Merr. and *B. hemicardia* Elmer ex Merr. on p. 15, *B. neopurpurea* L.B.Sm. & Wassh. on p. 89, and *B. sorsogonensis* (Merr.) Elmer on p. 121, lack a type specimen, but have an original specimen.

The workers and students of *Begonia* in SE Asia should be grateful to the author for compiling such a useful publication that builds the bibliographical groundwork for the documentation of the richness of the species of this genus in the region; many of them are local endemic and have high ornamental value. Seen in this light, this publication should be considered essential and a bible to plant growers, landscapers and gardeners who need to check on the correct name of a species of *Begonia* from SE Asia used in horticulture.

Literature Cited: Brummit, R.K. 2001. *World Geographical Scheme for Recording Plant Distributions*. Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation,

Pittsburgh.

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The Herbarium

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