

New Plant Species Discovered In The Philippines

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There are around 10,000 to 14,000 plant species found in the Philippines that are currently on record. About half of these are endemic to the country, meaning these plant types can only be found in a specific

area or region, and nowhere

else. The list of existing flora in

the country has been updated

with new species that were only

recently discovered. During the

recently concluded 2019

Philippine Plant Festival,

Fernando Aurige, who currently

works at the Plant Mutation

Breeding and Biotechnology

Research Unit, a division of the

Philippine Nuclear Research

Institute that specializes in the

research of nuclear science and technology in agriculture through mutation breeding of crop plants,

discussed some of the newest discoveries made in the field. He explained that when new species are

discovered, their scientific names are either based on a location or a person, depending on the person who

identified the species. One of the latest inclusions

is named after the areas where they were first

identified. An example is a member of the

begonia family such as the *Begonia elnidoensis*

found in El Nido, Palawan.

FLOWER POWER *Begonia elnidoensis*

(PhytoImages.siu.edu) "Characterized by a long

stem that reaches up to 20 centimeters, it

commonly grows in shady locations, and relies

on organic matter as plant and animal remains

for nutrition," said Aurige, adding that the

height of the plant and its growing conditions

could make it possible to grow in a vertical garden. Aside from being named after their location of origin,

some species are named as a tribute to people who have contributed a lot in society, or to a group of

people who uphold the country's culture. Similar to the *Begonia elnidoensis*, the *amorphophallus*

adamsensis was also named after the place where it was first seen. This species of aroids was discovered

in Adams, Ilocos Norte. It usually grows up to six feet tall and has a narrower spathe or the large leaf-like

part or pair of some plants that encloses a flower cluster. Aside from being named after their location of

origin, some species are named as a tribute to people who have contributed a lot in society, or to a group

of people who uphold the country's culture. Examples of this are the *medinilla theresae*, *hoya indae sarae*,



begonia tagbanua, and the discospermum reyesii. 3/8/2019 New Plant Species Discovered In The Philippines » Manila Bulletin Lifestyle <https://lifestyle.mb.com.ph/2019/03/05/new-plant-species-discovered-in-the-philippines/> 4/9 The medinilla theresae is named after biodiversity expert Theresa Mundita Lim. Currently endemic in select regions of Mindanao, the plant is an erect shrub that grows directly from its stems on ultramafic, or igneous rich, soil. It can grow up to 1.5 meters tall. In the meantime, the hoya insaesarae was discovered by a team of biodiversity experts from the University of Mindanao. A distinct tell of the flower is that the apex of the flowering plant measures about 1.4 centimeters with a tinge of the color purple and light pink at the tip. This new species of the Hoya wax plant was named after Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte Carpio for her environmental advocacies and nature conservation programs across the Davao region. Following in this trend was a team of scientists, one of whom was an alumna of Far Eastern University. This led to naming their latest finding after the founder and president of FEU, Dr. Nicanor Reyes Sr. The discospermum reyesii, belonging to the rubiaceae (coffee) family, is a tree species discovered in Mt. Lantoy, Cebu. It closely resembles a flowering plant called D. whitfordii from the arecaceae family because of slightly similar leaf blades, leaf apices, and non-ribbed fruits. Its differences lie in the size of the fruit because D. reyesii has smaller fruits with smaller and fewer seeds found in them. Lastly, another flower type named after a tribe in Palawan is the Begonia tagbanua. Aurige described its leaves as "delicate, similar to (a) wing in appearance." The Begonia tagbanua is a dainty plant, which only grows at a maximum of six centimeters. A number of other species in the country are still waiting to be discovered. These new findings could prove to be helpful when it comes to natural medicine, food, and other benefits. According to the United Nations on Biological Diversity, however, some of the species found in the country are in danger of extinction because of global warming, pollution, and other forms of degradation. This urges scientists to conduct analysis more promptly and efficiently through thorough research and effective preservation techniques. With proper initiatives, it's only a matter of time before more flower species can be discovered in the Philippines.

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