



photo by Paul Tsamtsis

Begonia turrialbae Burt-Utley by Morris Mueller

Begonia turrialbae was discovered in Central America by Dr. Kathleen Burt-Utley, quite recently by begonia discovery standards. It is so new that it is not even included in the 1986 edition of *Begoniaceae* published by the Smithsonian. *Begoniaceae* is known as the "last word" on known begonia species.

Dr. Burt-Utley made a presentation at the 2003 Oklahoma City ABS Convention and showed slides of the plant in its habitat. It covered a sizeable portion of a steep hillside. At that time she verified it as being a new species and published it as *B. turrialbae*. When I had received my plant of it just a few years before, it still had her collection number on it.

B. turrialbae has proven to be a very easy-to-grow plant with the exception

that it needs the higher humidity of a terrarium or greenhouse for optimum growth. The amount of light it receives changes its leaf color. Very high light will result in pale leaves with some brown in the markings. In low light the colors intensify and the leaves are marked with a dark vibrant green with lighter medium green areas.

It grows as a creeping, thin-stemmed rhizomatous plant and appears to have pustular foliage. The leaves are about two inches wide to about three inches long.

Propagation is quite easy by rhizome cuttings and may also be started from leaf cuttings, although I have not yet tried this method for this plant.

It seems tolerant of both warm and cool growing temperature. It has never bloomed for me, although other Branch members report the flowers to be white with a pale pink flush. Overall, it is a very easy plant to grow.

