

NEW ORCHID SPECIES FOUND ONLY ON JAVA ISLAND



The new orchid, *Gastrodia bambu*, is found mostly in West Java and Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

MALANG • Indonesian botanists have revealed their discovery of a new orchid species endemic to Java island. The species, *Gastrodia bambu*, was discovered by botanist Destario Metusala of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) at the Purwodadi Botanical Gardens in Central Java.

The discovery was revealed in **Phytotaxa**, an international scientific journal, published last month. The publication was written by Mr Destario and Dr Jatna Supriatna, a scientist with the University of Indonesia biological conservation department.

Mr Destario said the species was part of the holomikotropic orchid group, the orchids of which were often called "ghost orchids" due to their life cycle, which takes place in stages almost entirely underground, emerging above ground only when flowering. The name bambu (bamboo), he added, referred to its specific habitat.

"The entire population was found very close to old bamboo clumps, growing in wet soil containing partly decomposed bamboo leaf litter, in the very deep shade cast by the bamboo plant's canopy."

Mr Destario added that the *Gastrodia bambu* was found only on Java Island, mostly in West Java and Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta.

"Besides Mount Merapi, we also discovered the species at Mount Gede-Pangrango in West Java, the home of other species of the ghost orchid family. The species is very resistant to drought, excess light intensity and small changes occurring in the place where it's growing," he said.

The population has declined because of clear-cutting of bamboo clumps for logs and hot clouds intermittently released by Mount Merapi, a highly active volcano.

Local botanists estimate that fewer than 1,000 orchids of the new species exist today.

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