

# In Search of Heat Tolerance

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The bane of most of us growing begonias in the lower South are temperatures near or at 100 degrees in July, August, and some years such as 2018 continuing through September and October. Standbys many of us depend on are the cane-like with such species as *B. undulata*, *maculata*, *acnitifolia*, *platanifolia*, and *leathermaniae*. Next most popular are American rhizomatous species that most of us grow including *Begonia sericoneura* which withstands the worst of years, *thiemei*, and others. When it comes to Asian species, however, where most species seem to come from higher altitudes, it is more difficult to find durable begonias that will survive summers outdoors.. One of the few that has consistently thrived for me in both the dry climate of Oklahoma and the humid heat of Louisiana has been a species from the Philippines, *B. hernandioides*. So far in my trials, I have found that other species from Southern Thailand have turned out to be best. If you live in the deep South, I urge you to give the following species a try.



*Begonia U521* from Thailand

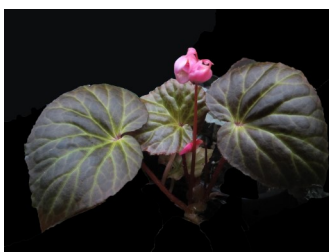
Charles Jaros and Maxine Zinmann found this begonia in Bangkok. I do have some doubts that it is a species, but no doubt that it loves heat. It has a felted leaf, unusual flowers and short upright rhizomes. It is amazingly easy to reproduce from leaves; I found the rhizomes slower to root. This is now one of my favorites.



*Begonia U484*, also from Thailand

Mary Sizemore brought this to us. With its sturdy greyish leaves and creeping rhizomes, I find this one to love heat. To reproduce this one, I found it necessary to root the whole leaf petiole rather than using leaf pieces. Seed are also easy.

*Begonia U501* from Asia This too was a Mary Sizemore import; the U# list says from Asia, but I wonder if it too is not from Thailand. It is another heat lover, but is rather intolerant of low temperatures for me. This one is very Rex Cultorum like in appearance. It reproduces very easily from leaf pieces, but although mine has bloomed two years now, I have been unable to get seed set which is a shame since I believe it would be a good hybrid parent.



*Begonia U514*

Bruce Pearson brought us this Thailand species. I got leaves from both a light and dark form from the Ft. Worth Botanic Garden and found it very easy to reproduce from leaf cuttings. To my delight this one seemed to thrive in last summer's heat. I find the dark form especially delightful. This winter my starts are blooming and I hope I have a seed pod forming.

Others that I am trialing this year are *B. mindorensis* from the Philippines, *B. kui* from Vietnam, and several others from Vietnam, but I have not grown them long enough to have a report on their heat tolerance.

If I incorporate these into hybrids, I can hope in turn to increase the heat tolerance of the resulting plants.