



## **CPC Position Paper on Threatened and Endangered Plants**

*Background: As part of the advocacy efforts aligned with the mission to protect native and endangered plant species of the United States and its territories whose natural ranges extend into Canada and Mexico, The Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) is posting its Position Paper on Threatened and Endangered Plants.*

### **Threatened and Endangered Plants**

Since 1984, the mission of the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) has been to save the threatened and endangered native plants of North America by supporting evidence-based measures to prevent extinction. The landmark 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) has served to protect imperiled species, and, as advocates for native plants and biological diversity, we support the ESA (1) and champion the enforcement of federal, state and local environmental laws to protect native species and the ecosystems that provide the essential context for their survival. Many plants are at risk owing to habitat destruction, climate change, invasive non-native plants and loss of pollinators, among other challenges. Without human intervention, an estimated one million of Earth's plant and animal species may face extinction in the next decades. To save rare and imperiled plants, CPC collaborates with a network of Conservation Partners--botanical gardens, arboreta, seed banks, herbaria and research organizations--and is a member of the Endangered Species Coalition. Looking beyond the borders of the U.S.A., the CPC endorses international efforts aimed at securing the fate of Earth's imperiled species.

Each plant species represents a unique genetic and phenotypic solution to the problem of how to live on planet Earth. Each species occupies a unique nexus in the web of interactions among living organisms, and between them and their environments. As a result, the loss of a single species represents loss of irretrievable and precious information, while also endangering other species that are part of the interactive web of life. The CPC believes that human beings have the urgent responsibility to prevent this loss by taking action accordingly.

### **CPC therefore supports:**

- Conserving imperiled plants in nature (in situ) and in gardens, seed banks and other repositories for living tissue (ex situ).
- Preserving existing critical habitat of imperiled species and unoccupied "refuge" areas where species can recover and persist.
- Safeguarding native species and ecosystems as a fundamental responsibility of humanity, but also because of the importance of biodiverse, wild populations as sources for medicine, food and other human needs, importantly including their ethnobotanical uses and significance to Native American and indigenous communities.
- Advancing the conservation of imperiled flora through science-based standards and protocols, research, cutting edge technology, information synthesis, data sharing and collaboration.
- Providing strict legal safeguards and consistent standards for threatened species awaiting listing, parallel to those for listed endangered plants.
- Increasing the number of trained botanists, conservation biologists and ecologists to conduct the exacting scientific research, monitoring and interventions necessary for native plant conservation and to provide science-based information to inform decision-making, responsible environmental policy-making by government entities at all levels, and conservation action.
- Augmenting viable, genetically diverse germplasm in seed banks and gene banks as a critical step in the restoration of self-sustaining wild populations and the survival and recovery of plants at risk.
- Supporting herbaria and their repositories of vouchers that provide expertly identified evidence to establish the historical ranges of species.
- Backing increased funding for restoration of native ecosystems and rare plants on public lands and for active management and sound strategies to combat invasive weeds.

- Working actively to protect pollinators with which plant species have co-evolved and upon which they depend for their successful reproduction.
- Empowering people with science-based knowledge to become advocates and activists for native plants threatened with extinction.

(1) According to the ESA, "'Endangered' means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. 'Threatened' means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future." ([https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/ESA\\_basics.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/ESA_basics.pdf))