



A native oak woodland in California.

(c) Linda Vorobik



western lily, *Lilium occidentale*

PLANTS

Are Endangered Species Too!

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Plants are the primary foundations of life on earth. Plants produce foods, fibers and medicines that fuel our economies and sustain our societies. Plants anchor the ecosystems that we depend on for invaluable services including water purification, crop pollination and erosion control.

Few people understand the importance of plants. When they think of

"nature," people relate most closely to animals. This affinity for charismatic megafauna built the powerful conserva-

tion movement we know today. Unfortunately, an imbalance has developed in laws, budgets and policies that treat native plants as second class conservation citizens. As a result, native plants lose ground to sprawl, pollution, invasive exotic organisms, and, most tragically, to neglect. Almost one third of our flora is currently considered to be imperiled.

Many formidable barriers hinder native plant conservation. One of the most serious barriers is that neither state nor federal endangered species laws adequately protect plants. Imperiled plants are half as likely as imperiled animals to receive listing protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Worse, the ESA provides inferior protection for listed plants than for listed animals. It is illegal to kill any listed animal without a permit under Section 9 of the ESA. However, under

What Needs to Be Done:

- Federal agencies must employ adequate numbers of botanists.
- Funding for the listing and recovery of plant species must be increased.
- State ESAs must provide adequate protection to plants and animals.
- Federal budgets for invasive species control must be increased.
- The United States must ratify the Global Convention on Biological Diversity and promote attainment of the conservation targets in the Convention's Global Plant Conservation Strategy.

Section 9, many federally listed plants can be deliberately killed without a permit and without mitigation. This happens every day. Additionally, only 29 states provide any protection for plants under state endangered species laws.

Qualified botanists are essential to proper species and land management. But resource and land management agencies are critically understaffed in botany. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), for example, employs only 68 botanists nationwide to manage plants on its 264 million acres. That equates to one botanist per four million acres! Botany under-staffing means that imperiled plants are killed on public lands simply due to lack of personnel to perform routine, and legally required, surveys and monitoring.

The Native Plant Conservation Campaign is a new effort to address these problems. The Campaign is a partnership between the Center for Biological Diversity and the California Native Plant Society.

The Campaign has 4 primary goals:

- 1.) Build a network of native plant societies, wildflower clubs and other native plant groups to build a strong collaborative national movement for native plant conservation.
- 2.) Increase awareness of the importance of native plants.
- 3.) Create tools to make plant conservation advocacy easier and more effective.
- 4.) Improve laws and increase funding for native plant conservation at state and federal levels.

To these ends, the Campaign is producing basic materials on the value of native plants and the threats they face. The first of these is the "Wild Plants, Wild Places" brochure, which is being distributed to native plant societies, agencies and conservation organizations around the U.S.

The Campaign is working to address problems specific to protecting native plants on several fronts. Thus far, the Campaign has submitted a budget proposal to Congress designed to bring botany staffing in the BLM and U.S. Forest Service closer to adequacy and produced a report detailing the barriers to native plant conservation in U.S. laws, funding and staffing.

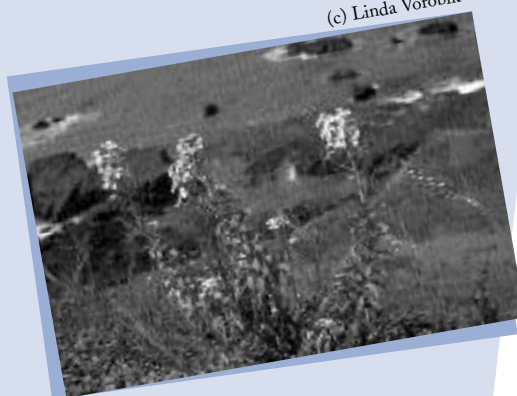
Unless obstacles are removed so that plant conservation programs can be effective and successful, efforts to conserve native species and ecosystems are doomed to failure. For more information, please go to:

<http://www.cnps.org/npsc.htm> or contact: emilyr@cnps.org

Fast Facts:

- There are more than three times as many imperiled plants in the U.S. than imperiled animals.
- Fully one third of our flora is considered to be at risk of extinction.
- Imperiled plants are half as likely to receive listing protection under the ESA as imperiled animals.
- Of the roughly 700 plants that are listed under the ESA, only 4% have habitat protection through federal designation of critical habitat.
- Under the ESA, many federally listed plants can be deliberately killed without a permit and with no requirements for mitigation.
- Only 29 states provide any protection for plants under state endangered species laws.
- The federal government spends 25 times more towards recovery of animals listed under ESA than towards plant recovery programs.

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Menzies's wallflower, *Erysimum menziesii* ssp. *menziesii*

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Iris lupine: this habitat type is being rapidly lost to housing development.