



THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA POSITION PAPER

The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulation of responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results.

GCA SUPPORTS PRESERVATION OF NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants are defined as grasses, shrubs, vines, trees and herbaceous flora that exist in a given region through non-human introduction.

All life depends on the plant kingdom. The Garden Club of America, committed to preserving our worldwide system of richly varied habitats, places importance on protection of native plant biodiversity, the ecosystems that support them, and our own quality of life. Native plants are an inseparable part of the natural beauty we need to preserve in the American landscape. These native plants are an irreplaceable source for new medicinal and agricultural products, an increasingly important part of our economy.

To date, it is estimated that 200 native plant species in the United States have become extinct.¹ The many interrelated causes include habitat loss or degradation, an increase in populations of dominant invasive species, and over harvesting for commercial and private uses.

It is vital that existing laws and regulations protecting native plant species be strengthened and administered using the best scientific knowledge available. New concepts of stewardship need to be encouraged to prevent critical loss of plant diversity in the United States and around the world. We view the 1973 Endangered Species Act as one of America's landmark pieces of conservation legislation. We encourage amendments to that Act, or re-authorization initiatives, that both strengthen measures to protect the nation's rare, threatened and endangered species, and create workable science-based recovery programs.

The Garden Club of America's commitments to protection of native plants include encouragement and support of:

- Legislation that will effectively protect our native plants, with emphasis on those that are at risk.
- Positive incentives (including funding) that would encourage private landowners to protect native plants.
- Cooperation with state and federal agencies as in the GCA project "Partners for Plants," assisting work with rare/threatened species, invasive species and medicinal plants.
- The St. Louis Voluntary Codes of Conduct's² measures to prevent and control ecosystem damage by exotic invasive plants.
- The Be Plant Wise Partnership of The Garden Club of America, National Parks system, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Student Conservation Association (www.beplantwise.org)
- Planting policies on public lands that use native plants, control invasive plants, and preserve or restore healthy ecosystems.
- Increased funding for plant protection and restoration on public lands, including adequate funding for more botanists.
- Implementation of federal field research projects to insure sustainability of wild-collected medicinal plants.
- Encouragement of domestic and international trade in nursery-propagated native plants, including imported bulb species, thus eliminating damaging traffic in wild-collected flora.
- Educational programs to increase awareness of the need to protect native plants.
- Public and private support of botanical education for a well-trained future workforce (like GCA fellowships).

¹ Center for Plant Conservation: www.centerforplantconservation.org

² Missouri Botanical Garden: www.mobot.org/invasives

The purpose of The Garden Club of America is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.