The Colorado Rare Plant Conservation Initiative, with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, is developing a statewide conservation strategy for Colorado’s imperiled native plants and their habitats.

The strategy includes six action areas that emphasize on-the-ground habitat protection:

1. Secure on-the-ground habitat protection for all of Colorado’s globally imperiled plants.
2. Facilitate public awareness and stewardship.
4. Establish genetic conservation programs.
5. Conduct research to understand plant distribution, biology, and status.
6. Develop state-level recognition and resources for rare plant conservation.

The key outcomes of the strategy:

1. Habitat is conserved for all of Colorado’s most imperiled native plant species.
2. Decision-makers, landowners, and stakeholders better understand plant conservation status and act in support of plant conservation efforts.
3. Conservation projects and partners are closely coordinated.
4. Policies and resources are acquired to support rare plant conservation.

Members of the Rare Plant Conservation Initiative
Betty Ford Alpine Gardens
Bureau of Land Management
Center for Native Ecosystems
Colorado Department of Agriculture
Colorado Department of Transportation
Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs
Colorado Native Plant Society
Colorado Natural Areas Program
Colorado Natural Heritage Program
Colorado Open Lands
Denver Botanic Gardens
Rocky Mountain Society of Botanical Artists
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
University of Colorado Herbarium

Support state-level recognition & targeted conservation on behalf of Colorado’s most imperiled native plants.

Join us in saving Colorado’s wildflowers.

For more information or to join the Rare Plant Conservation Initiative, please contact:

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We should preserve every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity.

-E. O. Wilson
One hundred thirteen native plant species in Colorado are considered imperiled or critically imperiled by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, meaning they are at significant risk of extinction. Of these species, 63 are endemic, growing only in Colorado and no place else in the world.

Nearly 50% of our state’s imperiled native plants are considered poorly or weakly conserved because, unlike animals, Colorado has no state-level recognition or protection for plants. The goal of the Rare Plant Conservation Initiative is to conserve Colorado’s most imperiled native plants and their habitats through collaborative partnerships for the preservation of our natural heritage and the benefit of future generations.

Our Window of Opportunity is Now.
Impacts to Colorado’s rare native plants are at an all-time high due to our rapidly expanding human population. Primary threats include habitat loss and fragmentation associated with resource extraction, motorized recreation, housing and urban development, and roads. Many rare plants are at risk due to a simple lack of awareness regarding their precarious status. Fortunately, despite the size and scale of these threats, we still have a chance to make a difference through strategic conservation actions. Healthy populations of many imperiled plant species still exist and can be protected relatively easily.

The major contributors to rare plant habitat degradation are development, resource extraction (e.g., energy development, mining), motorized recreation, residential and commercial development, and road construction and maintenance. Other factors include hydrologic alteration, non-motorized recreation, invasive species, and collecting. The full impacts of climate change on imperiled species have yet to be determined, but are likely to further reduce habitat for rare plants that demand very specific growing conditions.

Where Do Imperiled Plants Grow?
The actual land needed to provide habitat for Colorado’s most imperiled plants only encompasses about 62,000 acres... to be determined, but are likely to further reduce habitat for rare plants that demand very specific growing conditions.

Colorado’s imperiled native plants occur primarily on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, followed by the U.S. Forest Service and private landowners. The remainder is divided between the National Park Service, other federal agencies, the State of Colorado, and others.

Why Conserve Rare Native Plants?
Endemic plant species help to make Colorado truly unique. Native plants are important but often overlooked components of biodiversity. They provide habitat and food for wildlife, birds, and insect pollinators, and are fundamental to the health of ecosystems. When native plants begin to disappear, the impacts are felt throughout natural systems.

Our rare native plants need active protection because they are rooted in place and can’t move out of the way of impending threats. They are very particular about where they grow, preferring specific soils and climates. This highly localized nature makes them very easy to destroy, often without anyone’s knowledge or intent. But it also makes them easier to conserve because they typically occur in small numbers and can be protected with a relatively small investment of resources.

What Threatens Our Imperiled Plants?
Loss and fragmentation of habitat are the greatest challenges to the conservation of Colorado’s imperiled native plants. Our population growth is soaring and resulting impacts pose an imminent threat to vulnerable plant species. Colorado’s population is expected to grow from 4.7 million in 2006 to 7.3 million in 2030. As a consequence, Colorado is losing approximately 100,000 acres of open space per year to development.

Nearly 50% of our state’s imperiled native plants are considered poorly or weakly conserved because, unlike animals, Colorado has no state-level recognition or protection for plants. The goal of the Rare Plant Conservation Initiative is to conserve Colorado’s most imperiled native plants and their habitats through collaborative partnerships for the preservation of our natural heritage and the benefit of future generations.

The round-leaf four-o’clock (Oxybaphus rotundifolia) is a globally imperiled plant that is known only from shale barren outcrops in the Arkansas River Valley. Its bright magenta flowers open before dawn and close by mid-morning. The round-leaf four-o’clock is threatened by residential, industrial and recreational development. Although efforts are underway to protect this species, increases in development, mining and water projects could result in species decline or extinction. Small scale conservation actions could help conserve this species.

The Colorado Rare Plant Conservation Initiative is a diverse partnership of public and private organizations dedicated to conserving our state’s natural heritage by improving the stewardship of Colorado’s most imperiled plants.

Landownership in acres of Colorado’s Imperiled Plant Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landowner</th>
<th>Acres</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Gov.</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO/Land Trust/Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Federal</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Park Service</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Forest Service</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colorado Natural Heritage Program