

Dwarf milkweed



© Michael Menefee

Arkansas Valley evening primrose



© Susan Panjabi

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.
3. Minimize impacts of specific land uses and threats.
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.

Penland penstemon



© Bill Jennings

Pagosa skyrocket



© David Anderson

*Plants have too long been hidden in plain sight... now is the time to bring plants out from the background, and to put the conservation needs of our nation's flora squarely into view.*

*-Bruce Stein & Kelly Gravuer*

### 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.**

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North Park phacelia © Frank Weston

**Colorado Rare Plant Conservation Initiative**  
*Saving Colorado's Wildflowers*

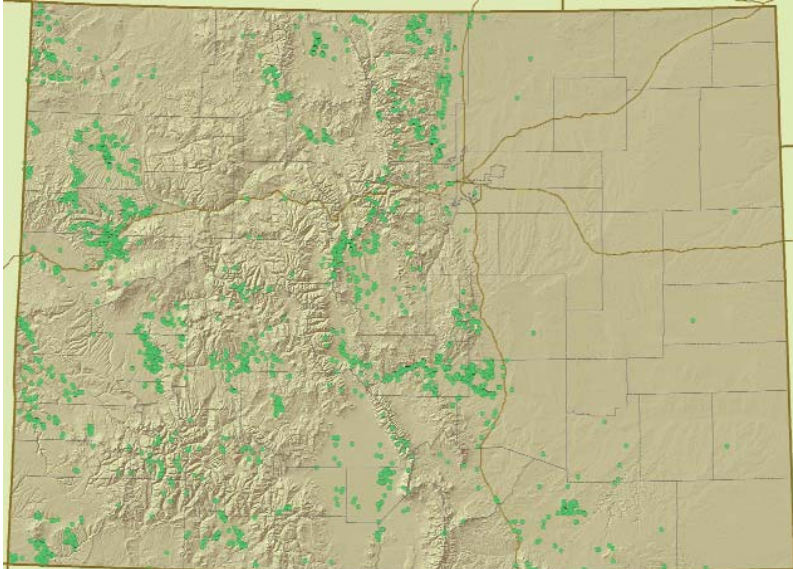
We should **preserve** every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to **humanity.**

*-E. O. Wilson*

## 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.

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.



Mapped locations of the most imperiled plant species in Colorado. Note: locations are enlarged for greater visibility. Source: Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

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 also at risk due to a simple lack of

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.

Photo: © Susan Panjabi



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.

Currently thirteen of Colorado's most imperiled plants are on the federal *Threatened and Endangered Species* list. We can help keep this number from growing by increasing the awareness of public agencies, private landowners, and the public about our imperiled plants and by also providing opportunities and incentives to conserve them.

### Why Conserve Rare Native Plants?

Colorado's rare plants are irreplaceable parts of the state's natural heritage. 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.

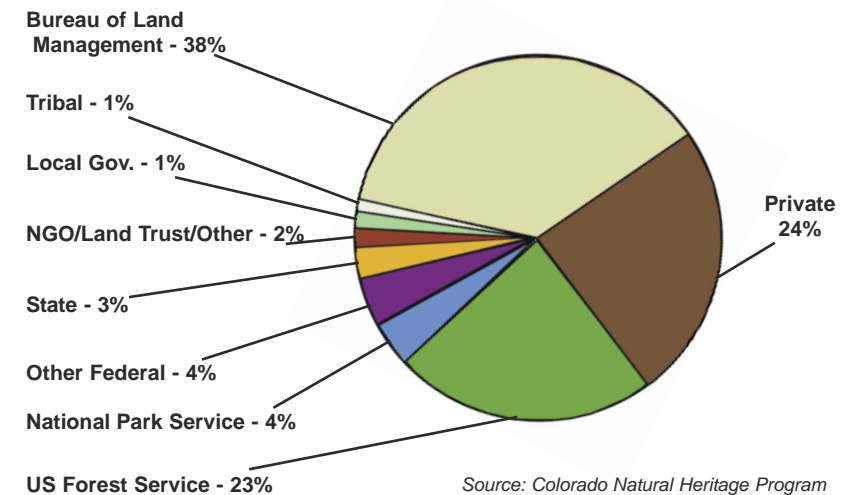
The major contributors to rare plant habitat degradation are development, resource extraction (e.g., energy development, mining), motorized recreation, residential and commercial development, and road construction and maintenance. Other factors include hydrologic alteration, non-motorized recreation, 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 statewide, only <.001% of our land area. Barrens and shrublands are particularly important habitat types for rare plants, followed by pinyon-juniper woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and alpine habitats.

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.

Landownership in acres of Colorado's Imperiled Plant Species



Source: Colorado Natural Heritage Program