



Developing a PlantNetwork response to Target 8 of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*

The *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* aims to halt the current and continuing loss of plant biodiversity, by 2010. Target 8 of this programme aims to 'secure 60 per cent of threatened plant species in accessible *ex situ* collections, preferably in the country of origin, and 10 per cent of them included in recovery and restoration programmes'.

At a meeting of PlantNetwork: the Plant Collections Network of Britain & Ireland, on 6–7th April 2005 at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, eight priorities were elaborated for botanical collections in Ireland and Britain to develop a co-ordinated response to support efforts to meet the 2010 target.

In particular the role of *ex situ* collections in serving the broader remit of plant conservation through public awareness, building and sharing cultivation expertise, collaborating with *in situ* conservation programs, and in lobbying at governmental level were all seen as vital elements that plant collections and their staff can bring to conservation work in these islands. The meeting included representatives of 53 institutions in Britain and Ireland.

The following aims were adopted by the PlantNetwork Conference, to be included in the *PlantNetwork Strategy Plan 2006–2010*.

AIMS

- *Ensure that no threatened species of native plant in Britain or Ireland becomes extinct, and support efforts to safeguard all threatened species in the wild in Britain and Ireland [c.400 taxa].*
- *Bring together ex situ and in situ conservation efforts, by developing horticultural expertise for ex situ conservation to support in situ recovery programmes.*
- *Assess which threatened species are already in cultivation in botanic gardens in Britain and Ireland.*
- *Increase the number of threatened species in cultivation and the number of botanic gardens growing endangered plants for the purposes of*
 - *assisting current and future conservation projects*
 - *developing horticultural knowledge of threatened plants and*
 - *raising public awareness of the importance of plants and their conservation.*
- *Develop, collate and widely disseminate scientific and horticultural protocols for the ex situ cultivation of threatened plants in Britain and Ireland.*
- *Raise political and public awareness of the issues surrounding native flora and practical approaches to its conservation.*

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of these priorities are:

- To identify and agree priority tasks for botanic gardens in Britain and Ireland in relation to the achievement of Target 8 of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*
- To ensure that horticultural expertise and facilities are available in PlantNetwork member institutions to support a coordinated programme in the conservation of threatened plants
- To support the development and maintenance of partnerships with those working on *in situ* plant conservation to maintain and protect threatened plants and their habitats.

PREAMBLE

PlantNetwork,

Recognising the importance and value of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*, adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in April 2002, in particular the goals of Target 8 included in the Strategy, PlantNetwork has worked with its members to establish a set of priorities for botanical collections in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales to support the achievement of Target 8 in these islands;

Recognising that many threatened taxa will only be conserved successfully if a range of conservation, management and recovery approaches is applied, using a combination of *in situ* and *ex situ* techniques, the eventual aim being to ensure that there are secure wild populations of such species *in situ*, preferably in their original, native habitats and sites;

Noting that a range of existing national plans and other instruments and initiatives has been developed in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (such as national biodiversity strategies and action plans and national plant 'Red Data' lists) which provide useful reference points to highlight priority actions and approaches;

Pointing out that collection holders need to make themselves familiar with work already being undertaken on a particular species, as well as the relevant legalities and national authorities responsible (i.e. English Nature; Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Commission of Wales, Department of Environment & Local Government) before initiating any work on native plant conservation;

Understanding that collection holders should take every opportunity to raise political and public awareness of endangered plants through the development of displays and by undertaking other educational initiatives in their gardens to illustrate the threats facing plant species and the role that all citizens can play in plant conservation, including changing attitudes and influencing public opinion and political action;

Appreciating the need to exchange, disseminate widely and maintain up-to-date information on all threatened native plant taxa, PlantNetwork intends to develop a clearing-house mechanism for documents and other information sources pertinent to this work.

THE PRIORITIES

Adopts the following eight priorities to be achieved by 2010:

Priority 1: 100% of critically endangered vascular plant species in managed *ex situ* collections

1a: PlantNetwork Gardens involved in every appropriate national, regional or local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or Irish Priority Species conservation programme.

1b: Species in the Extinct in the Wild (EW) category secured in no fewer than two living collections.

1c: Species in the Endangered (E) category, with high rates of decline, secured in no fewer than two living collections.

Priority 2: Genetically representative conservation collections established for all vascular plant species with small, limited or rapidly declining extant populations

Priority 3: Cultivation and propagation protocols available for all threatened plant species

3a: On-line database of cultivation and propagation protocols launched by end of 2006.

3b: Duplication of effort minimised through the collation and dissemination of available datasets.

Priority 4: Participate in species recovery or management programmes with partners

4a: 100% of UKBAP & Irish Priority Species included in recovery programmes.

Priority 5: Develop complementary collections of threatened bryophytes in cultivation

5a: A PlantNetwork Conference organised with the British Bryological Society (BBS) on how horticulture and botanical collections can contribute to bryophyte conservation.

Priority 6: Public and political awareness raised of native flora, and the need for its conservation.

6a: 25% of PlantNetwork gardens working with appropriate partners or community groups to develop public-awareness programmes for plant conservation.

6b: Positive stories on plant conservation promoted in the media, with articles in all major horticultural-news journals by 2007.

6c: A 20% increase in public understanding of need for conservation of native plants needs achieved.

6d: Coherent shared themes for plant conservation developed and implemented throughout PlantNetwork gardens, including the production of framework documents to assist with individual education projects.

6e: 50% of PlantNetwork member institutions participating in International Biodiversity Day (22nd May) every year.

Priority 7: Build the capacity required in PlantNetwork member institutions to achieve the PlantNetwork targets for Target 8 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

7a: Side-by-side living collections of critical native species developed in PlantNetwork member institutions, with at least one such collection in each region (England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland).

7b: Expertise in native plant taxonomy available and accessible in 50% of PlantNetwork member institutions.

Priority 8: Best practice achieved in the implementation of actions needed to meet the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

8a: Website established to disseminate protocols and best-practice information, and to highlight gaps, as a clearing-house mechanism.

8b: Available guidelines for the collection, acquisition and maintenance of genetic diversity of *ex situ* material applied and, where necessary, developed, for the management of collections.

8c: PlantNetwork member institutions to have accessible, effective and comprehensive documentation systems for their native plant collections.