



THE GARDEN CLUB *of* AMERICA

## THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA POSITION PAPER

The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulating responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results. The Garden Club of America is a nonpartisan, issue-oriented advocate for a beautiful, healthy planet.

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### NATIVE PLANTS

In North America, a native plant is defined as an indigenous grass, shrub, vine, tree, or herbaceous flora species present in a habitat or ecosystem prior to the arrival of European settlers on the continent. Native plants are an inseparable part of the natural beauty inherent in the American landscape.

All life depends on the plant kingdom. The Garden Club of America is committed to preserving our system of richly varied habitats and protecting native plant biodiversity, the ecosystems that support them, and our own quality of life. The root systems of native plants control erosion, moderate floods, filter water, reduce water needed for landscape maintenance, and sequester carbon. Native plants provide food and habitat for pollinators, and they supply an important genetic record for future food, agriculture, and plant-derived products. A significant number of North American native species are at risk of extinction due to such factors as habitat loss, invasive species, climate change, and pesticide use.

It is vital that existing laws and regulations protecting native plant species be strengthened and administered using current peer-reviewed science. To prevent critical loss of plant diversity, continued scholarship and innovative stewardship protocols should be encouraged. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 is America's landmark conservation legislation. The GCA encourages amendments to the act that strengthen measures to protect the nation's rare, endangered and threatened species — with a special emphasis on plants — and create science-based recovery programs.

The Garden Club of America supports federal, state, and local legislation, policy, and individual action that address the following:

- Promote awareness and conservation of native species whose status in the wild is listed as rare, endangered, or threatened.
- Encourage private landowners to protect native plants through funding and other incentives.
- Support cooperative programs that work with local, state, and federal agencies to monitor and conserve rare plants, restore native habitat, and remove invasive plants on public lands.
- Support measures to prevent and control ecosystem damage caused by non-native invasive plants.
- Support seed banks to preserve the genetic record of native plants.
- Encourage public land-use policies that incorporate native plants, control invasive plants, discourage the inappropriate use of toxic herbicides, and preserve or restore healthy ecosystems.
- Increase funding for plant protection and restoration on public lands, including adequate funding for more plant scientists.
- Support continued development and implementation of federal field research projects to ensure sustainability of wild-collected medicinal plants.
- Encourage domestic trade in local nursery-propagated native plants, reducing traffic in wild-collected flora.
- Support educational programs to increase awareness of the need to protect native plants and promote their use by landscapers and home gardeners.
- Advocate for public and private support for botanical research and education to ensure a well-trained future workforce, to be achieved through academic initiatives that advance healthy ecosystems.