

Cultivating conservation: a new initiative for plant biodiversity in the southwestern United States

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As Santa Fe Botanical Garden embarks on a new science and conservation initiative in 2024, this abstract introduces a pioneering effort aimed at bolstering plant conservation endeavours in the biologically diverse states of New Mexico and Arizona. With New Mexico boasting the fourth highest plant diversity in the United States, including 235 rare and endangered plant species of which 109 are endemic, the imperative for concerted conservation action is unmistakable. The proposed initiative endeavours to establish a collaborative network of botanical gardens across the region, leveraging collective expertise and resources to address this pressing need. Through a multifaceted approach encompassing capacity-building initiatives, joint field surveys, population monitoring, seed collecting and sharing, and herbarium vouchers accessible through an online database, the initiative seeks to fortify the conservation landscape and safeguard the rich plant biodiversity of the area. Central to the initiative are training programs tailored for botanical garden staff and local conservationists. Additionally, research projects will be undertaken to deepen our understanding of plant diversity and inform conservation strategies. By fostering collaboration among Santa Fe Botanical Garden, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and the public, the initiative endeavours to catalyse impactful conservation outcomes and ensure the long-term sustainability of plant populations in New Mexico and Arizona. This abstract underscores the significance of Santa Fe Botanical Garden's new initiative in addressing the conservation challenges facing the region, emphasising the importance of collective action in safeguarding the invaluable plant heritage of New Mexico and Arizona for future generations.