

## **The Southeastern Plant Conservation Alliance (SE PCA) and Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN): supporting partners to create national impact**

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The Atlanta Botanical Garden (ABG) works across the Southeastern United States and Neotropics to promote regional and international capacity building. The Garden advances conservation science through its Southeastern Center for Conservation through research, collaborations, and applied conservation activities. The Southeastern Plant Conservation Alliance (SE PCA), housed at the Garden, is a diverse partnership that bridges gaps between local and national efforts while collaborating to restore and prevent the loss of plant diversity. This is achieved by building capacity, facilitating novel partnerships, and leveraging shared resources to stimulate collective success. The formation of the SE PCA has allowed partners to amplify efforts to do the following: Advocating for plants along with other nationally recognized groups, we promote the conservation of native plants and ecosystems. Partnering with Botanic Gardens Conservation International - U.S to conduct a gap analysis, we have evaluated *ex-situ* collections of priority regional species. We are working with our network to meet conservation and research needs. The Southeastern Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN) list is the first of its kind for plants. The Garden coordinated its creation by working with regional experts on behalf of the SE PCA. This included NatureServe, Terwilliger Consulting, Inc., Flora of the Southeastern United States, and the Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Wildlife Diversity Committee. This tool presents species of conservation concern with regional responsibility and opportunity for collaboration, identifies high level threats and needs, and sets actionable priorities across political boundaries. This RSGCN illustrates the critical role of plants and the need to take action in the face of our changing climate by integrating them into broader efforts to conserve wildlife. Identification of ecological systems will inform potential Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs), as well as future iterations of the Southeastern animal RSGCN, and promote a more effective landscape conservation.