

Plant Conservation in Spain: strategies to halt the loss of plant diversity

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Plants are recognized as a vital component and an essential resource on Earth. They are important to maintain the functioning of life through the balance between the ecosystem stability (resilience) and the resources they provide to other organisms including human beings. Plants are widely used for food, timber, medicines, fuel, etc. Some have the potential to be future crops with the consequent economic and cultural importance, now being even more important if we realize on the different scenarios of climate change. However, some features on plant diversity are still poorly known, as for example we still do not have a complete assembled checklist of plants on Earth. Many plant species, or the communities they form, are in danger of extinction, others are threatened because of habitat loss or transformation usually as result of human-induced pressures. If those dangerous factors for plants are not decelerated or even stopped our opportunities to develop solutions can also be lost.

The Spanish Society of Plant Conservation Biology (SEBiCoP, in Spanish) was created in 2002 by a group of specialists in botany and conservation of wild plants in Spain. SEBiCoP is now a national reference entity on the conservation of wild flora, collaborating with different institutions at local, regional or country levels. Its last biennial meeting was held in Madrid, on July 4-7, 2017. Two hundred participants presented their works in thematic sessions devoted to invasive species, genetic conservation, protection of cryptogamic flora, conservation translocations, ethnobotany, etc. Additionally to the congress, a day-trip to the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park was also held, to visit different threatened plant populations and recognize the management measures that are being carried out, as well as to know different projects related to the impact of global change.

Some presentations exposed during the plenary or thematic sessions at the meeting are now publishing in a special issue of *Mediterranean Botany* to show the main ideas and experiences shared during the symposium. Plant conservation focuses on different aspects relevant to plant diversity, from the study of floras, as a basic feature of quantifying taxa to face other related features, i.e. endangered taxa at local or regional scale (García Girón & Martínez, 2018; García Cardó & al., 2018; Pérez-Latorre & al., 2018) or the poor role of bryophytes in the national protection catalogues (Albertos & al., 2018). The use of tools such as species distribution models with threatened species is also treated, as in the case of the rare giant orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum* (Orchidaceae) in the center of the Iberian Peninsula (Ramos Gutiérrez & al., 2018). Genetic analyses provide important insights for plant conservation protocols, more in rare or endemic plants, this is the case of *Genista sanabrensis* in Northern Iberian Peninsula (Cires & al., 2018). The identification and evaluation of wild relatives of crops in Spain is important for plant conservation, many of them require urgent conservation management plans (Rubio Teso & al., 2018).

Other aspects are those related to the correspondence between dispersal structures and degree of threat, this is the case of the study on the presence of long-distance dispersal syndromes in the Canary flora at risk (Coello & al., 2018). Studies on seed biology are also widely studied in plant conservation, seeds provide a complementary and efficient way for ex situ conservation of species, as in the case of the germination features of wild species populations, such as *Plantago lanceolata* (Mira & al., 2018). Restoration has been also considered in this special issue from different points of view including the development of micropropagation protocols in Iberian forest species (Cernadas & al., 2018), translocations of endemic species due to historical improvements on communications (Cursach & al., 2018), or the reinforcing of endangered species in Basque country mires (Infante & al., 2018). Finally, ethnobotanical studies including medicinal species widely used in South America (Luzuriaga-Quichimbo & al., 2018) were also successfully presented in the SEBiCoP meeting.

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