

A global campaign to tackle the illegal trade in plants

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Wildlife trafficking is the most immediate threat to animals and plants in many parts of the world and wildlife trafficking is the third largest illegal trade in the world, often using the same supply chains as narcotics and weapons. However, many people remain largely unaware that there even is illegal trade in plants to say nothing of the wide-ranging negative impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems, economies, and human health. Few are aware that more plant species go extinct annually than animals, with over-harvesting and illegal trade as major drivers of plant extinctions. And the situation is getting worse. The internet has accelerated trade in plants and enabled sellers and buyers, to trade with relative ease. This further facilitates the illegal trade and is creating unrealistic expectations of demands and needs for plant species. As a result, plants are being poached from the wild leading to local, and even in some cases global extinctions. Combating the illegal trade of plants requires a multi-pronged effort from a wide range of strategic partners. In November 2023, BGCI launched a new initiative that draws on the extensive international reach of botanic gardens worldwide and their networks, partners and visitor outreach capacity. This vision has been unanimously endorsed by BGCI's IAC with strong recognition of both the need for this new collaboration and the unique potential for botanic gardens to lead this important work. To understand the role of botanic gardens in tackling this illegal trade BGCI conducted a survey of gardens which will help inform a Global Campaign to stop illegal plant trade and promote legal trade. This presentation will share key results of the survey and the steps being taken to address plant extinctions due to illegal trade.