

Contribution of the National Botanical Garden in Santo Domingo to the conservation of the autochthonous flora

M. Novas^{*}, G. Pol, and T. Clase

Jardín Botánico Nacional “Dr Rafael M. Moscoso”, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

^{*}Corresponding author email: mnova@jbn.gob.do

Isla Española, especially the Dominican Republic, is home to an astounding plant biodiversity with more than 6,000 species of which more than 34% are endemic, meaning that they cannot be found in any other place in the world. This floristic abundance is distributed in the various ecosystems of the Dominican Republic. Undoubtedly, many of these species are threatened and in danger of extinction, mostly caused by destruction and decrease of their habitat. Thus, conservation of the native flora is of such vital importance. The Dr Rafael M. Moscoso National Botanical Garden, or more specifically its Division of Conservation is dedicated to take action in order to protect the autochthonous flora of Isla Española. The measures taken to protect the island's plant biodiversity include: investigation and evaluation of the conservation status of species, propagation of endangered species in the facilities of the National Botanical Garden, and establishing of new populations of these species in situ in their natural environment. To be able to plan these conservation action strategies, the Red List of the Vascular Flora in the Dominican Republic is used, which classifies more than 1,300 species in different categories of endangerment, closely following the guidelines provided by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The National Botanical Garden so far has propagated and planted numerous species in danger of extinction, in situ in their natural environment as well as by restoring the species in installations ex situ. Among other species, these include: *Cojoba bahorucensis*, *Psidium nannophyllum*, *Illicium ekmanii*, *Solanum dendroicum*, *Pilea samanensis*, *Melocactus pedernalensis*, and *Pleodendron ekmanii*. All of the species mentioned are especially rare and only found in small areas with very specific habitat characteristics. Many of them are already growing successfully in restored areas by the Botanical Garden and will play an important role in further conservation action plans as seed suppliers.