# Every Species Is Important

**Objective II:** Plant diversity is urgently and effectively conserved


## Target 7: At least 75 per cent of known threatened plant species conserved *in situ*

*In situ* conservation, or the conservation of species in their natural environments, is generally considered to be the primary approach for conservation as it allows evolutionary processes to continue. Moreover, for some species, which are dependent on complex relationships with other species for their survival (specialized pollinators, soil bacteria etc.), it may be the only feasible conservation method.


Nikos Krigas


Chicago Botanic Garden

In addition to designating protected areas, some countries have put in place laws specifically designed to conserve threatened species. Such species need to be conserved where they grow, and this can include urban landscapes and production areas, as well as natural and semi-natural habitats.

### Where are we now?

A major constraint to the achievement of this target at the global level is the lack of information on which plant species are globally threatened. However, better information is available at national and regional levels.

In Europe, for example, half of the region's 4,700 vascular plant endemics are in danger of extinction and 64 have already become extinct. The disappearance and declining populations of many endangered plant species present the European Union with one of its greatest conservation challenges. Since its beginning in 1992, LIFE, the financial instrument for the environment, has been a cornerstone of plant conservation efforts in Europe. A number of LIFE projects have focused specifically on conserving rare species *in situ*. Such projects often differ considerably according to the individual plant species targeted by the project. However, they typically include:

- combining local conservation measures (*in situ*) and off-site actions (*ex situ*) such as plant nurseries;


Suzanne Sharrock





*"I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers"*

Claude Monet


Mecit Vural

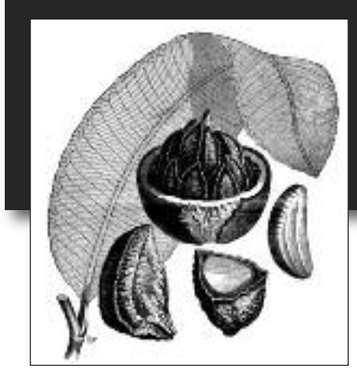

Sara Oldfield

- increasing plant species knowledge by gathering scientific information (population sizes and locations, genetic studies, etc.) to be used in the development and implementation of protection, management or recovery plans;

- increasing public awareness and knowledge of the plant species (which is often very low), together with the establishment of partnerships with relevant stakeholders at the local level.

### The case of the Brazil nut

The Brazil nut tree has yellow flowers which, following pollination, give rise to the fruit and then the nuts. A particular insect, the orchid bee, is the only one able to enter the heavy flower and, using its long tongue, reach the nectar inside and pollinate the flower. The orchid bee is attracted by the scent produced by a particular orchid, which though it does not grow on the Brazil nut tree itself must be present nearby for pollination to occur. Furthermore, a second animal plays a unique part in the reproductive success of the Brazil nut tree. The outer casing of the fruit is so hard that only one known creature – the agouti, a large rodent with sharp, chisel-like teeth – can crack it open. The agoutis eat the nuts and bury others for later use; some of these are able to germinate and become new trees.



**Find out more:**

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/