



Global
Conservation
Consortium

Conifers



About the GCC for Conifers

The Global Conservation Consortium for Conifers (GCC) works to bring together the world's conifer experts, conservationists, and the botanic garden community to ensure that no wild conifer species becomes extinct.

The GCC is led by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, in collaboration with BGCI and other partners from across the world. The objective of the GCC is to address the conservation needs of this important group.

This network of experts seeks to develop and implement a comprehensive conservation strategy, using both *ex situ* and *in situ* approaches, supported by a sound taxonomic framework and detailed scientific investigation, to prevent the extinction of the world's conifers.

The Global Conservation Consortia are coordinated by BGCI. Contact us ggc@bgci.org.



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About Conifers

Conifers are a diverse and iconic plant group of over 600 species from 7 families: Araucariaceae, Cephalotaxaceae, Cupressaceae, Pinaceae, Podocarpaceae, Sciadopityaceae and Taxaceae. They can be found on all continents except the treeless Antarctica, and make up almost 40% of all forest cover, playing a critical role in the health of our planet. Conifers are also economically important as a sources of timber, fuel, resins, food, and medicines.



Many members of the group are heavily exploited for their highly durable timber, used in high quality furniture and craftwork.

A third of conifer species are listed as threatened and 13 species are listed under CITES so that any trade is managed sustainably.



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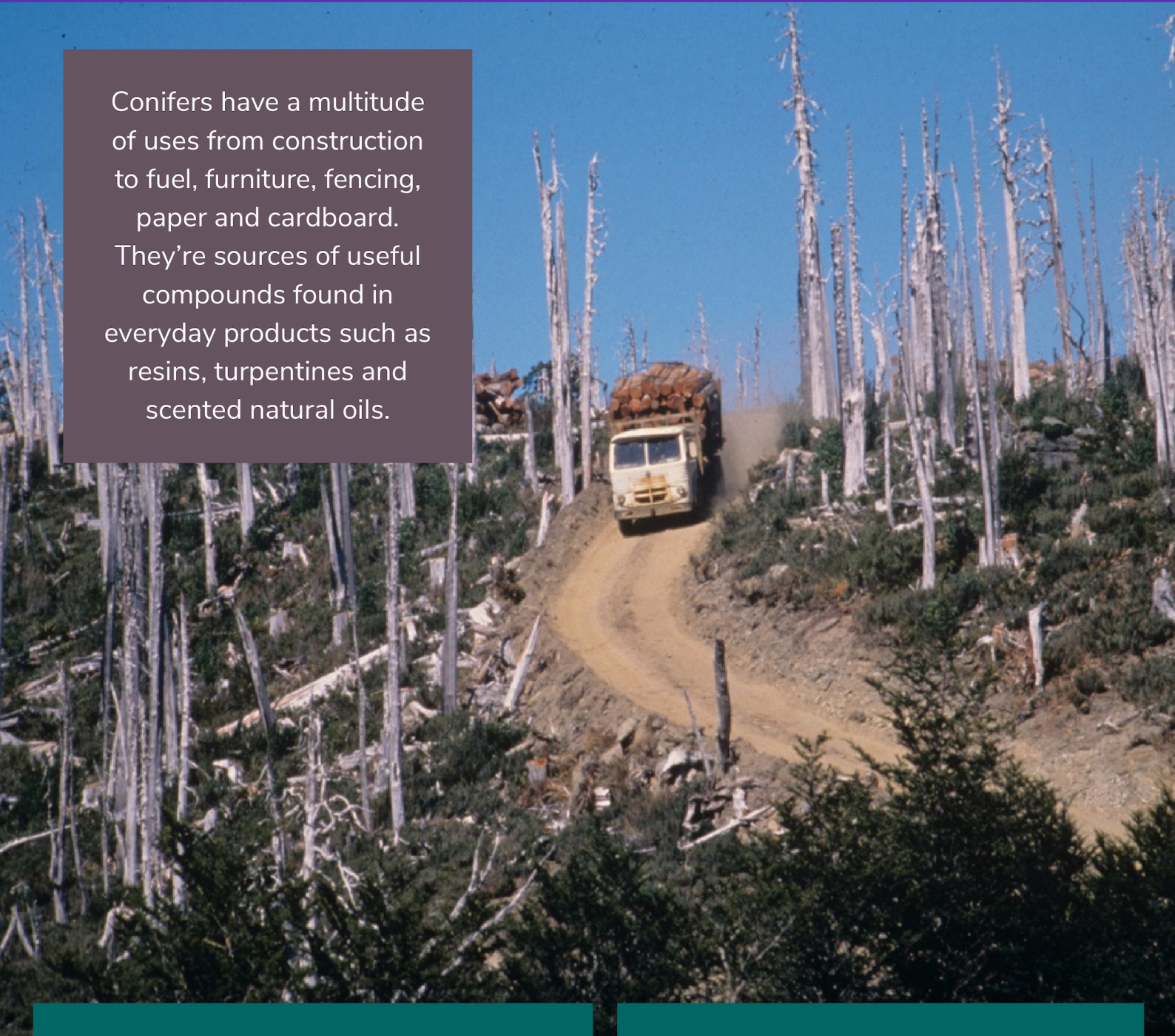
Conifers

Uses

Conifers have a multitude of uses from construction to fuel, furniture, fencing, paper and cardboard. They're sources of useful compounds found in everyday products such as resins, turpentine and scented natural oils.

Conifers provide us with nutritious and tasty foods such as pine nuts (piñones), and are used for flavoring drinks such as gin.

Conifers also have a role to play in modern and traditional medicines: the anti-cancer drug Taxol is derived from yew trees.





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Threats

Of the 615 species recognized on the IUCN Red List, a third are listed as threatened with extinction. Conifers face a variety of threats, including climate change, forest fires, pests and diseases, habitat loss, illegal logging, and over-exploitation.



Threats are often underreported, leaving significant gaps in the knowledge needed to direct future conservation action.



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Conservation

The Global Conservation Consortium for Conifers aims to ensure that no wild conifer species becomes extinct.

Currently, conifers are undergoing their third round of IUCN red list assessments.

Additionally, a global *ex situ* conservation gap analysis is underway to determine where conservation efforts are best targeted.



Operational Regions

China

China has a rich conifer flora with more than 150 taxa including iconic endemic conifers such as *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Pseudolarix amabilis* and *Cathaya argyrophylla*. Almost half have been assessed as threatened. The principal threats arise from conversion of forest for agricultural use, plantation forestry and urbanization as well as over-exploitation for timber. Many taxa are relictual and naturally have small populations: these are especially susceptible to anthropogenic influences and are a major focus of China's Plant Species with Extremely Small Populations programme.

Southeast Asia

Conservation work in Southeast Asia has involved capacity building within countries such as Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia, supporting the publication of checklists and conifer conservation status reports. The International Conifer Conservation Programme based at RBGE has helped develop conservation strategies for Mai Hing Sam (*Glyptostrobus pensilis*) in Lao PDR.

North America

Conifers dominate many North American forests. Alongside an increasing number of wildfires and detrimental change to climate in the northern hemisphere, conifers are facing an abundance of invasive pests and diseases working their way across the continent. In addition to gene conservation, specialists have been using climate modeling to identify future sites for conservation efforts.

Central and South America

Habitat loss and land fragmentation threaten many endemic species of Central and South America. We are working towards an increase in the number of *in situ* conservation programmes in the region, such as the Nasampulli Reserve in Chile which protects an area of 1650 ha, dominated by the threatened keystone species *Araucaria araucana*. Safe sites within Chile are being used to promote *ex situ* conservation for a range of conifers and their associated species. Additional capacity building efforts have resulted in the publication of a checklist and a book on threatened plants of south-central Chile.

Oceania

Oceania is home to over 100 endemic species of conifers, of which 37 are threatened. Raising awareness of these unique threatened conifers helps to draw attention for conservation efforts both *in situ* and *ex situ*. Promoting taxonomic research using traditional methods and molecular techniques can serve to identify new taxa and to investigate evolutionary relationships.