

News from Illegal Plant Trade Coalition

IPTC Newsletter #2: December 2025

End of Year Reflections

As we come to the close of an extraordinary year, it feels important to pause, reflect, and acknowledge the collective effort that has given shape and momentum to the Illegal Plant Trade Coalition (IPTC). What began as a shared concern across regions and disciplines has grown into a global, coordinated effort committed to combating the illegal and unsustainable trade in plants. This year has been one of foundation-building, partnership, data collection, and an inspiring sense of purpose, pushed forward with optimism of positive impact through collaborative efforts.

Strengthening evidence, policy, and global coordination

This year saw substantial movement in identifying research gaps, connecting with potential partners and strengthening the Coalition's strategic direction.

This informed the way forward to consolidate the Coalition's brand identity, our tiered partnership and strategy, the latter being a novel combination of green criminology and behavioural change for plant conservation.

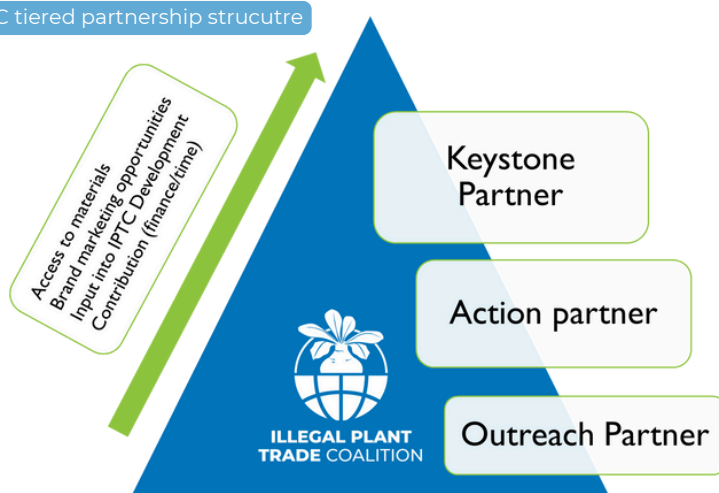
This year, the Coalition also agreed on its core branding, including the colour palette, logo, and tagline: "Think Twice, Trade Right." The tagline has since become the Coalition's official hashtag, helping bring together content on social media related to the Coalition's work and the illegal plant trade. The logo, designed to reflect a unified global voice for plant conservation aiming to address and mitigate poaching of threatened plant species, has been warmly received by our diverse partners and stakeholders, reinforcing a shared identity, easy recognition, and sense of purpose across the map.

With the definition of the number of different wheels that the Coalition must turn, dependent on the different key stakeholders, we introduced our flexible tiered partnership. This model aspires to be inclusive of all stakeholders while also maintaining individual understanding that each organisation that joins also has its own strategy and goals to answer to.

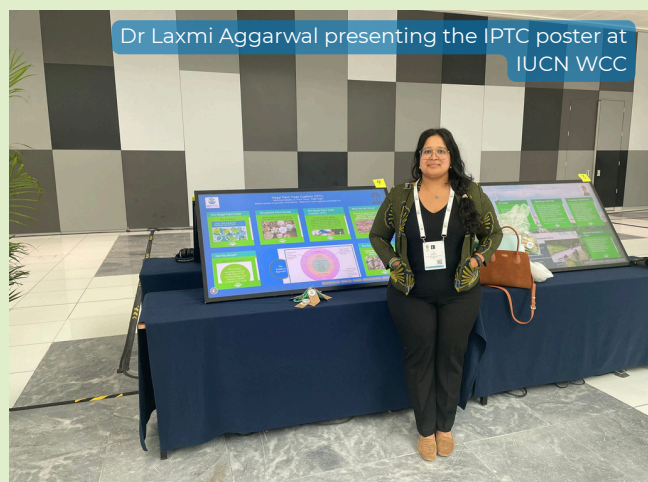
Our engagements also extended to high-level meetings across sectors including universities and horticultural bodies who are increasingly recognising the urgency of illegal plant trade within conservation discussions. The Coalition continues to create a unified voice that links enforcement, research, horticulture, and community-based conservation.

IPTC tiered partnership structure

IPTC Full logo and tagline



The official launch of the IPTC at the IUCN World Conservation Congress created a strong platform to raise global awareness on the urgent need to address illegal plant trade as a conservation priority. Our launch attracted interest from botanic gardens, universities, horticulture industries, government agencies, NGOs, enforcement agencies and conservation practitioners across continents. This created fresh opportunities for collaboration, developed an understanding of the existing illegal trade and plant theft practices, and confidence for the possibility of coordinated action.



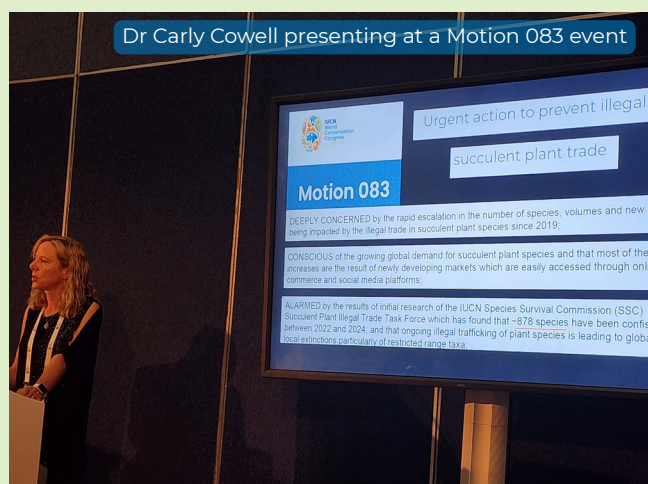
These conversations highlighted shared challenges which primarily included species identification, loopholes in the legal trade, online trafficking, the lack of coordinated monitoring, limited scope for calculating the extent of the illegal trade, and the need for better due diligence across supply chains. Positively, they also revealed growing willingness across the sector to contribute meaningfully to solutions.

This year's IUCN Congress marked a major milestone for global plant conservation, with three key motions directly relevant to tackling the illegal plant trade successfully adopted.



🌿 We thank our partners who worked hard to ensure that Motion 083, titled "Urgent action to prevent illegal succulent plant trade" was adopted. This is a great step for IUCN towards recognition of illegal wildlife trade extending beyond fauna to include flora. This motion recognises the scale and urgency of illegal flora trafficking and calls for stronger measures across source, transit, and market countries.

🌿 Motion 061 Recognition of ecocide as an international crime. Defining severe, widespread, or long-term environmental harm as prosecutable under national and international law allows the exploration of how criminalising ecocide could support ecosystem recovery.



With these Motions now recognised, there is now a solid foundation to encourage governments and institutions to close regulatory gaps and invest in capacity building to address the threats from illegal plant harvesting. Together, these Motions signal growing global recognition that illegal plant trade is a critical conservation issue, and they provide a strong foundation for shaping the Coalition's priorities and collaborative work in 2026 and beyond.

The months following the launch were a period of significant activity. We received a promising amount of interest and support from new organisations wishing to onboard to the Coalition, and we have been actively working to process these requests.



Shortly after the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, the Convention on Illegal Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) held its 20th Conference of the Parties in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Information Document 76 was published, focusing on strengthening cooperation between IUCN and CITES on combating the illegal trade in succulent plants, which highlights IUCN's Motion 083. This document was submitted by the United Kingdom on behalf of BGCI.

The visibility of Motion 083 at COP20 is especially important, as CITES Parties are increasingly confronted with challenges linked to illegal plant harvesting and trafficking, including weak species identification capacity, exploitation of legal trade loopholes, online marketplaces, and limited data on trade volumes and the long-term implications of this illicit trade. By formally recognising these issues, the mandate for coordinated international responses across source, transit, and consumer countries now has a foundation from which to be strengthened. These documents also reinforce the need for improved enforcement, stronger due diligence within supply chains, and enhanced collaboration between conservation institutions and regulatory authorities.

The UK Government's role in publishing the Motion on behalf of BGCI highlights the importance of constructive partnerships between governments and technical organisations. Botanic gardens, in particular, bring critical expertise in taxonomy, conservation science, and ex situ safeguarding that is essential for effective policy implementation under CITES. Their involvement signals a shift toward more integrated, science-based approaches to tackling illegal plant trade.

More broadly, the recognition of Motion 083 within the CITES COP context demonstrates a clear evolution in international conservation discourse, where illegal wildlife trade is no longer viewed as a predominantly animal-focused issue. Flora are increasingly understood as equally vulnerable, equally valuable, and equally deserving of robust protection frameworks.

2025: a year of new alliances

We were delighted to welcome our first cohort of Action Partners. These are organisations that provide horticultural expertise, research insights, experiences, and on-the-ground support across their networks. Their willingness to contribute staff time, specialist knowledge, awareness campaigns and practical support even without financial commitments or financial returns has demonstrated the spirit of collaboration that defines this coalition.

We proudly welcome our Action Partners:



- ✦ Jardim Botânico Municipal de Bauru
- ✦ Species Saviour Initiative
- ✦ The Francisco Javier Clavijero Botanic Garden
- ✦ National Botanic Gardens of Ireland
- ✦ Giardino botanico cantonale delle Isole di Brissago

We are also honoured to welcome our newest Keystone Partner:

✦ Longwood Gardens ✦ an organisation whose leadership, expertise, and long-term commitment will play a central role in guiding the strategic direction of the Coalition. As a Keystone Partner, they bring not only scientific and horticultural excellence, but also the capacity to work on-the-ground in plant poaching hotspots such as Tanzania.



LONGWOOD
GARDENS

We thank the continued support of our Keystone Partners



toronto
ZOO



THE HUNTINGTON



UNITED STATES
BOTANIC GARDEN



LONGWOOD
GARDENS



We look forward to working closely with all our existing and new partners as we scale our collective efforts to address the illegal plant trade worldwide

What Next?

Illegal plant trade is a serious biodiversity crime, one that has gone on for far too long without being addressed, and tackling it requires a united, interdisciplinary response.

The Coalition's role in facilitating this response through knowledge exchange, due diligence mechanisms, and collaborative action is becoming increasingly vital.

This year has proven that addressing plant crime is no longer a niche concern, together, we have laid the foundations of a global network capable of transforming how the world understands, tracks, and prevents the illegal trade in plants. The coming year will build on that foundation through:

- 🌿 Strengthened global pathways, collaborating to mitigate the illegal trade
- 🌿 Tools that improve communication between key stakeholders
- 🌿 Greater collaboration between partners
- 🌿 Improved tools for monitoring, and due diligence
- 🌿 Raising awareness of the illegal trade in flora
- 🌿 Broader engagement with botanical, scientific, and horticultural institutions
- 🌿 Support for countries and communities most affected by plant trafficking
- 🌿 Accelerating the impact of our collective work

In 2026 we aim to hit the ground running with planned meetings with the Steering Committee of Keystone Partners, after which we will bring together all Action Partners to discuss priorities, workflows, and opportunities for cross-regional collaboration. This will be a key moment in shaping the Coalition's next steps and short and long-term projects.

We are hopeful that, as the IPTC grows, leading organisations and interested individuals will increasingly take on leadership roles within the Coalition, helping steer its direction, shape global standards, and deepen its operational reach.



Warm Wishes for the Festive Season

As we move into the holiday period, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to every interested individual, partner, supporter, and new member who joined us this year. Thank you for your dedication, your trust, and your belief in the IPTC, and we look forward to meeting more interested partners in the following year!

We are pleased to share this year's BGCI Christmas card which is especially meaningful to us. It was created by our Head of Membership and Conservation Services, Patricia Malcolm, and features her oil painting of *Disa barbata* (Orchidaceae) a Critically Endangered species from South Africa supported through the Global Botanic Garden Fund. The painting is dedicated to the memory of Donovan (Don) Kirkwood, Curator of Stellenbosch University Botanical Garden, who tragically lost his life while searching for rare plants he cared so deeply about.

As we share this card, we pause to reflect on and remember conservationists around the world who work with extraordinary dedication often in difficult and dangerous conditions to protect fauna and flora diversity. Their courage, generosity, and commitment remind us why this work matters and continue to inspire the global community we are so fortunate to be part of.

We wish you and your teams a peaceful, restorative festive season and a bright, collaborative, and impactful 2025.

Together, we can make a real difference.



Merry Christmas
and Best Wishes
for 2026.



BGCI