



PRESS RELEASE from BGCI AND FFI

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Magnolias - bloom *and* doom?

Over half the world's magnolia species are close to extinction in the wild, says new report

Magnolias may be blooming in Britain's gardens this spring, but in the wild it's an altogether different story. Over half the world's magnolia species are facing extinction in their native forest habitats, according to an authoritative new report from two leading plant conservation organisations.

The *Red List of the Magnoliaceae*, published jointly today by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and Fauna & Flora International (FFI), through the Global Trees Campaign (GTC), identifies 131 wild magnolias as being in danger of extinction, from a global total of 245 species.

The significance of this potentially catastrophic loss lies not only in the threat to the genetic diversity of the family, but also because they are a highly sensitive indicator of the well-being of the forests in which they are found. Magnolias are among the most ancient groups of flowering plants and have long been cultivated by mankind. Some specimens growing in the precincts of Chinese temples are estimated to be up to 800 years old. Still popular as ornamental plants in gardens around the world (although fewer than 15 species are common in cultivation), in the wild magnolias are a source of timber, food and medicines for local communities.

Speaking at the report launch in London, Sara Oldfield, Secretary General of BGCI and one of the report's authors, said: "*We now have a choice. We can use the new information to conserve these important trees and restore their forest habitats or we can catalogue their extinction.*"

"*The second option*", she added, "*would be a tragedy*".

Some two thirds of known magnolia species are found in Asia, with over 40% occurring in southern China. According to the report half of all wild Chinese magnolias are at risk of extinction. In the Americas, north and south, where magnolias are also found in the wild, a similar picture is emerging. In Colombia, for example, the report concludes that the threat of extinction hangs over 30 of its native species.

Underpinning the report is a comprehensive mapping exercise carried out at Bournemouth University. According to report co-author, Professor Adrian Newton, "*The maps provide an*

excellent baseline for future monitoring and conservation planning at a time of rapid environmental change. Comparing species distribution with forest cover for a whole family of flowering plants gives us a unique snapshot of forest biodiversity.”

Drawing on the report’s findings BGC I and FFI are collaborating through the Global Trees Campaign to boost conservation efforts for threatened magnolias. Later this month, at the **3rd Global Botanic Gardens Congress** in Wuhan, China (April 16 - 20, 2007), BGC I will launch a survey of botanic garden collections of threatened magnolias species. This will enable BGC I to identify precisely which threatened species are not yet held in *ex situ* collections (in botanic gardens and arboreta, etc.), and take action to ensure that integrated conservation measures for these species are developed and implemented.

FFI is already working to improve the status of the wild populations of the most threatened magnolia species in China. “*We are aiming to restore wild populations of key magnolia species in Yunnan Province,*” said Dr Georgina Magin, Global Trees Campaign Coordinator at FFI, “*We hope to be able to extend this work to take action for other species, both in China and in other parts of the world.*”

Also being launched at the 3rd Global Botanic Gardens Congress in Wuhan is China’s *Strategy for Plant Conservation*, designed to coordinate and strengthen the work already being undertaken by Chinese universities, botanic gardens and Government agencies to conserve Chinese magnolias. BGC I has been instrumental in assisting key Chinese agencies to develop the Strategy.

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Notes for Editors

1. The *Red List of the Magnoliaceae* is published by FFI in association with BGC I as a contribution to the FFI/BGC I Global Trees Campaign. Hard copies of the report are available from FFI, 4th Floor, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2JD, Tel 01223 571000, or it can be downloaded in PDF form from www.globaltrees.org

2. **Red Listing** is the means of classifying species according to any given conservation status. It is applied to animals as well as plants. The Red List system of IUCN (the World Conservation Union) is internationally recognised and is the system that has been used in this report. The system works by assessing each species according to a number of agreed criteria, such as the number of individuals existing in the wild, the size and distribution of populations as well as changes in population size. On the basis of these criteria, species are given a threat

'designation' which can be: Extinct, Extinct in the wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened, Data Deficient or Least Concern.

3. For further information on magnolia diversity, where to see magnolias in the UK and for images of magnolias, visit www.bgci.org

4. **Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)** is a membership organization linking botanic gardens in over 120 countries in a shared commitment to biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and environmental education. BGCI aims to mobilise botanic gardens and work with partners to secure plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet. BGCI provides the Secretariat for the IUCN/SSC Global Tree Specialist Group.

5. **Fauna & Flora International (FFI)**, founded in 1903 and the world's oldest international conservation organization, acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, are based on sound science and take account of human needs. For further information see www.fauna-flora.org

6. **The Centre for Conservation Ecology at Bournemouth University** is one of the largest research groups in the UK engaged in conservation science, with interests in the conservation biology of tree species, and the conservation ecology and restoration of a range of habitats, including forest, heathland, freshwater, coastal and marine systems. For further information see http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/conservation/abouttheschool/egs/egs_cecb.html

7. **The Global Trees Campaign** is a joint initiative between FFI, BGCI, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and a range of other partners around the world working to save the world's most threatened trees and their habitats through conservation action, provision of information and support for sustainable use. For more information see www.globaltrees.org

8. Report authors

- Daniel Ciczuzza, Bournemouth University
- Professor Adrian Newton is Professor in Environmental and Geographical Sciences at Bournemouth University and Vice Chair of the IUCN/SSC Global Tree Specialist Group
- Sara Oldfield is Secretary General of BGCI and Chair of the IUCN/SSC Global Tree Specialist Group

9. Development of China's *Strategy for Plant Conservation* has been led by the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), the State Forestry Administration (SFA) and the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS).

10. **The 3rd Global Botanic Gardens Congress**, Wuhan, China, 16-20 April 2006 is being organised by BGCI, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Hubei Provincial Government and Wuhan Municipal Government. The theme of the Congress is 'Building a Sustainable Future – the Role of Botanic Gardens'. Further information is available from www.3gbgc.com

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