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Overcoming challenges to research and conservation of plant diversity in Haiti

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Haiti is a biodiversity hotspot with over 5600 plant species, ranking as the Caribbean's second most botanically diverse nation. The richness of Haiti's flora is threatened by unsustainable practices and a significant lack of contemporary data, with the last comprehensive floristic studies conducted between 1924–1928. Recognizing the urgent need for up-to-date research to inform conservation and restoration strategies, the Cayes Botanical Garden (CBG), Haiti's first botanical institution, initiated efforts in 2016 to document the country's flora. However, field research is hampered by political instability and logistical challenges. Notably, international organizations and government agencies are increasingly focusing on incorporating rare, native, and endemic species in reforestation and restoration efforts. CBG has embraced this shift, collaborating with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) to enhance botanical research. By prioritizing species assessment and recovery, and utilizing strategic planning and strong local partnerships, CBG aims to navigate security risks effectively. The garden has georeferenced over 150 endemic species, maintaining 15 in ex-situ conservation. In partnership with BGCI, CBG is working on the recovery of four critically endangered species: *Amirys apiculata*, *Meriana brevipenduculata*, *Hernandia obovata*, and *Clavija domingensis*. Additionally, CBG has undertaken an extensive medicinal plant study and collaborated with Heifer International on a significant restoration project in southern Haiti. This presentation will delve into CBG's strategies for overcoming research and conservation challenges, with a focus on its collaboration with BGCI to recover endangered species, highlighting methods to address security, foster partnerships, and influence conservation policy for Haitian plant diversity and ecosystems.