

## Conservation efforts and regional collaborations for plant recovery in the Southeastern United States and the Caribbean

E.E.D. Coffey\*, L. Blackmore, C. Radcliffe, J. Evans, and J.J. Ligon

Atlanta Botanical Garden, Southeastern Center for Conservation at Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America

\*Corresponding author email: [ecoffey@atlantabg.org](mailto:ecoffey@atlantabg.org)

Keywords: applied conservation, Caribbean plant conservation, *in situ* conservation,

The Atlanta Botanical Garden (ABG) actively advances conservation science in the Southeastern United States and the Caribbean through diverse research collaborations and native species recovery programs. This initiative aims to protect and recover endangered plant species, focusing on under-represented groups and restoring their natural habitats. Through partnerships in regions including Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and Cuba, ABG has implemented various conservation strategies, notably following significant ecological disruptions like hurricanes. ABG's key activities are not just theoretical concepts but tangible actions making a difference in plant conservation. These include prioritising species for seed banking, particularly post-hurricane in Puerto Rico, removing invasive species to facilitate the reintroduction of endangered plants, and conducting experimental *in situ* outplantings. The results of these efforts are evident in the development of *ex situ* conservation collections and the thorough population monitoring that ABG engages in to assess the survival and growth of threatened species. Restoration efforts are further complemented by capacity-building programs, such as workshops and on-site training sessions aimed at local conservationists, which are equipping them with the skills and knowledge to continue the work of plant conservation. Significantly, ABG has established tissue culture laboratories to produce viable plant material for augmenting natural populations at protected sites. These laboratories also support the outplanting of cultivated plants back into their natural settings, where their progress and integration into the ecosystem can be monitored. Through these concerted efforts, ABG fosters biodiversity and strengthens regional capabilities in plant conservation, ensuring a sustainable approach to preserving vital plant species in their native habitats.