# Rare Plants on BLM Lands

## Conserving rare plants maintains ecosystem resiliency, supports food and economic security, and preserves sources for medicines of the future.

Rare plants, though less obvious on the landscape than more common plant species, are extremely important for their local ecosystems and for human wellbeing.

Because of local coevolution, rare plants often have special relationships with pollinators. For example, the Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), an endemic and iconic species of the Mojave Desert ecoregion, is the sole host of the yucca moth (*Tegeticula synthetica*). (Photo: *Yucca brevifolia*, BLM CA660/Seeds of Success)

Rare plants may also be relatives of agricultural crops, such as the 16 BLM-sensitive *Allium* species, which are related to such pantry staples as garlic and onions. Preserving the genetic material of these crop wild relatives improves food and economic security in a changing climate. (Photo: *Allium peninsulare*, BLM CA180/Seeds of Success)

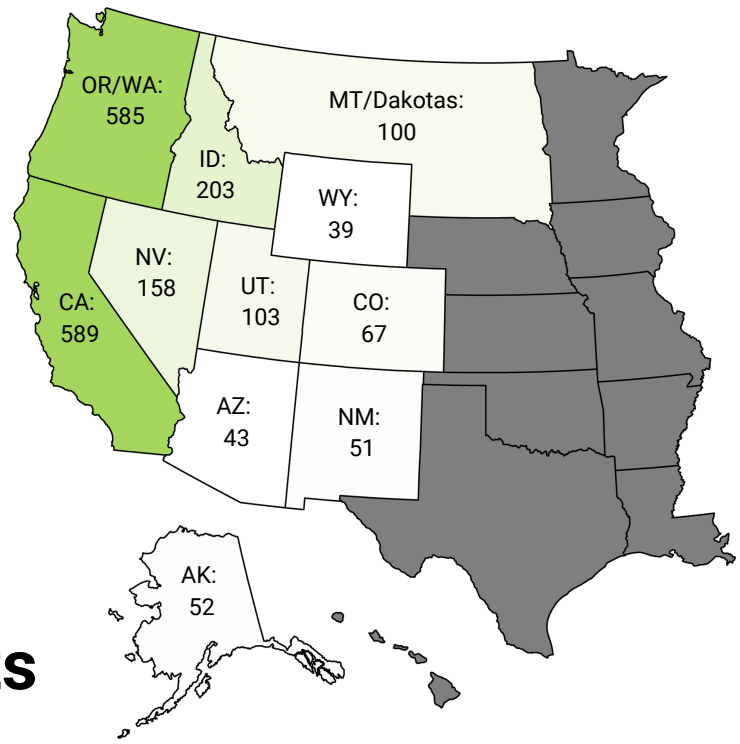
Rare plants may be medicinal in nature, too, such as the 7 BLM-sensitive species in the genus *Gentiana*, which people around the world have used for centuries to treat stomach and liver ailments, snake bites, and general inflammation, among other conditions. (Photo: *Gentiana affinis*, BLM WY050/Seeds of Success)

## How many rare plants are on BLM lands?

BLM manages more than 1,800 species of rare plants, lichen, and fungi (collectively referred to as “plants”) that are not listed on the Endangered Species Act. Because these plants are BLM-sensitive, or special status, species but are not federally protected, all 1,800+ species are managed by the BLM Plant Conservation and Restoration Program.

# Where are the rare plant hotspots?

The map at right shows the number of rare plant species managed by each BLM western state. BLM California manages the most rare plants overall, followed closely by Oregon and Washington. Every western state has at least one rare plant that occurs wholly or mostly on BLM lands.




# How many rare plants are we missing?

A recent analysis by NatureServe (natureserve.org) identified at least 688 additional rare plant species found on BLM lands in the west that are not managed on the BLM Special Status Species list. The analysis also proposed at least 13 additional rare plants for management across eastern states with BLM surface land holdings. When BLM subsurface holdings were considered, the number of proposed rare plants on BLM eastern lands increased to at least 596 species.

# What is BLM's responsibility for rare plants?

More than 300 rare plant species exist wholly or mostly on BLM lands. For these species, BLM is the only agency responsible for their conservation. In addition, about 20% of the rare plants that BLM manages have not had their conservation statuses updated in more than 20 years. Population monitoring and habitat restoration are necessary to ensure that BLM upholds its mandate to keep these rare plant species off the Endangered Species List.

For more information, contact Peggy Olwell, BLM Plant Conservation & Restoration Program Lead, polwell@blm.gov
Or visit www.blm.gov/rareplants