

Life-saving plants at risk of extinction

Hundreds of plants used to produce more than 50 percent of the world's prescription drugs are at risk of becoming extinct, researchers say.

Members of the Botanic Gardens Conservation International blamed stockpiling and habitat loss for putting the plants at risk, the BBC reported Saturday.

Experts expressed fear that illnesses like cancer and AIDS could never be cured if the plants become extinct.

The study, conducted by a group representing botanic gardens in 120 countries, reviewed input from more than 600 affiliates and university specialists. It cited concerns about the extinction of 400 medical plants.

At the top of the list were the yew tree, hoodia, magnolia and autumn crocus.

"The loss of the world's medicinal plants may not always be at the forefront of the public consciousness," said report author Belinda Hawkins. "However, it is not an overstatement to say that if the precipitous decline of these species is not halted, it could destabilize the future of global healthcare."

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