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Plant conservation in the Anthropocene – challenges and future prospects

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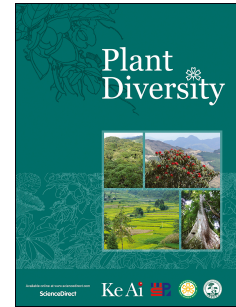
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**Plant conservation in the Anthropocene – challenges and future prospects**Vernon H. Heywood<sup>1</sup>*School of Biological Sciences, University of Reading, Reading RG6 6AS, UK*

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A B S T R A C T

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Despite the massive efforts that have been made to conserve plant diversity across the world during the past few decades, it is becoming increasingly evident that our current strategies are not sufficiently effective to prevent the continuing decline in biodiversity. As a recent report by the CBD indicates, current progress and commitments are insufficient to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020. Threatened species lists continue to grow while the world's governments fail to meet biodiversity conservation goals. Clearly, we are failing in our attempts to conserve biodiversity on a sufficient scale. The reasons for this situation are complex, including scientific, technical, sociological, economic and political factors. The conservation community is divided about how to respond. Some believe that saving all existing biodiversity is still an achievable goal. On the other hand, there are those who believe that we need to accept that biodiversity will inevitably continue to be lost, despite all our conservation actions and that we must focus on what to save, why and where. It has also been suggested that we need a new approach to conservation in the face of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene biosphere which we now inhabit. Whatever view one holds on the above issues, it is clear that we need to review the effectiveness of our current conservation strategies, identify the limiting factors that are preventing the Aichi goals being met and at the same time take whatever steps are necessary to make our conservation protocols more explicit, operational and efficient so as to achieve the maximum conservation effect. This paper addresses the key issues that underlie our failure to meet agreed targets and discusses the necessary changes to our conservation approaches. While we can justifiably be proud of our many achievements and successes in plant conservation in the past 30 years, which have helped slow the rate of loss, unless we devise a more coherent, consistent and integrated global strategy in which both the effectiveness and limitations of our current policies, action plans and procedures are recognized, and reflect this in national strategies, and then embark on a much bolder and ambitious set of actions, progress will be limited and plant diversity will continue to decline.

**1. Introduction**

*The transformed world of 2050 will demand new strategies and new approaches in conservation', Redford et al'. (2013)*

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