
The IUCN Seed Conservation Specialist Group: Connecting experts, identifying gaps, and developing best practices

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Abstract

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a global network of more than 7500 scientific experts, working together to achieve "A just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to reduce the loss of diversity of life on earth." The SSC includes over 140 Specialist Groups, organized taxonomically, regionally, or by discipline. The SSC Seed Conservation Specialist Group (SCSG) was proposed at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress and established in 2017, and its mission is to promote seed conservation by providing a network for knowledge-sharing in different ecosystems around the world, and aiding in prioritization, capacity building, and development of best practices. "Seed conservation" is defined as banking and/or preserving seeds of wild species, particularly those that are threatened or near threatened, primarily for *ex situ* germplasm storage and future reintroduction. The SCSG is comprised of experts including native seed bank managers, conservation program managers, national/international coordinators, and other specialists from around the world, and Botanic Gardens Conservation International serves as its secretariat. The work we do reduces risks faced by species and ecosystems, and it improves the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity. Our primary targets for the 2016-2020 quadrennium are: (i) Actively recruit new members (<https://www.bgci.org/plant-conservation/scsg>), (ii) Create an online global Seed Conservation Directory of Expertise (2018) (<http://www.bgci.org/plant-conservation/seedexpertise>), (iii) Conduct and publish a regional and topical gap analysis of seed conservation expertise (2019), (iv) Create IUCN Guidelines on Seed Conservation (2020). Recruitment is ongoing, and membership is open to all who are interested in seed conservation.

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