

Rare vine in Hawaii designated endangered species

March 17 2009, By AUDREY McAVOY , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- A rare Hawaii vine has been added to the endangered species list, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said Tuesday.

It's the second species to be classified as endangered by the Obama administration. The first was the reticulated flatwoods salamander, an amphibian native to south Georgia, north Florida and coastal South Carolina. It was put on the list last month.

The Hawaii plant is found only in the wet forests on the island of Molokai, 2,300 to 4,200 feet above sea level. The green vine's loosely spreading branches often tangle in a large mass.

The [vine](#) doesn't have a common name, and is known only by its scientific name of *Phyllostegia hispida*.

"It is our hope that it will come to the forefront of public attention along with Hawaii's other numerous endangered [plants](#)," said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the agency's Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office.

Only 10 individual plants of the vine had been spotted between 1910 and 1996, the agency said.

It was thought to be extinct in 1997. But two seedlings were found at the Nature Conservancy's Kamakou Preserve in 2005.

Since 2007, 24 wild plants have been discovered. A total of 238 plants are known to currently exist.

The vine's low numbers put it at higher risk for being wiped out by natural disasters like hurricanes and disease outbreaks.

Feral pigs, an invasive species, and competition from nonnative plants also threaten the plant.

The [Lyon Arboretum](#) in Honolulu, [Kalaupapa National Historical Park](#) on Molokai, and other organization have been growing specimens that may be used to plant the vine in the wild, the agency said.

The state's Department of Natural Resources has put up fences in some areas to protect them from pigs and other feral animals.

Hawaii has 329 federally protected [endangered species](#), more than any other state.

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