

China's plant resources need additional protections

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China needs to change where it sites its nature reserves and steer people out of remote rural villages toward cities to protect its valuable but threatened wild plant resources, according to an article published in the September issue of *BioScience*.

The article, by Weiguo Sang and Keping Ma of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Botany and Jan C. Axmacher of University College, London, lists seven strategic steps that are needed to secure the future of China's [wild plants](#), which the authors say are not effectively conserved by the country's existing protected areas. Many of those areas exist only on paper and are located far from Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, where rare species are found in the largest numbers, according to Sang and his coauthors.

Protected area managers in many cases currently lack basic data about which plant species are present on their reserves and even the exact area and extent of the reserves. Consequently, the effects of China's rapid economic development, the related spread of [invasive species](#), and the growth of tourism could drive to extinction species that could be sources of future crops and medicine.

Apart from creating well-enforced reserves in appropriate areas and encouraging the rural poor, who often overexploit plant resources, to move into cities, China should develop accurate data on threats to its [plant species](#), develop specific management and monitoring plans for the most threatened, and encourage sustainable eco-tourism that does not

damage plants, the BioScience authors argue. The country should also consider temporary protection of very [rare species](#) in botanical gardens and expand funding and training for traditional taxonomy, as well as experimental ecosystem laboratories and management.

Provided by American Institute of Biological Sciences

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