

US museum exhibit to focus on endangered plants

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A watercolour painting shows Lycaste Orchids, a species found in mid-elevation cloud forests from Nicaragua through to Bolivia, which are threatened by logging and agricultural development. Washington's Smithsonian Museum of Natural History is opening an exhibit of pictures endangered, threatened and extinct plants from around the world, officials have said.

The Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History on Saturday opens an exhibit of pictures endangered, threatened and extinct plants from around the world, officials said.

The goal is "to record the beauty of these plants that are more likely to disappear," said Carol Woodin with the American Society of Botanical Artists and the exhibit coordinator.

The 44 illustrations include detailed work from of "some of the top artists in the world," said Woodin.

"We wanted artists to develop relationships with scientists and then to focus on rare and at risk plants of today," she said.

The artists, who come from Australia, Brazil, Israel, South Africa, South Korea, Britain and the United States, were invited to choose the endangered plant of their choice to illustrate, as long as that plant was on an institutional list of endangered plants.

Of the nearly 300,000 known species of plants across the world, around 20 percent are in danger of extinction, said Peter Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

"The US flora is estimated to encompass about 20,000 species," said Raven.

Of these, "nearly 3000 US species are in decline," he told AFP.

The [plants](#) portrayed in the museum artwork are from the United States, South America, Australia, Europe and South Africa, organizers said.

The exhibit, titled "Losing Paradise," will remain in Washington until December, when it moves on to Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens outside London, Woodin said.

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