



Global Tree Specialist Group Newsletter

February 2025

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**BOTANIC
GARDENS**
CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL



GTA
Global Tree
Assessment



2025 is the last year of the current IUCN Quadrennium. This means we are coming to an end of the current GTSG (and IUCN/SSC) Strategic Plan. The Global Tree Specialist Group has delivered on some major milestones during the last quadrennium, with the Global Tree Assessment being one major achievement of the last quadrennium.

In October, trees became a comprehensively assessed group on the IUCN Red List, meaning that more than 80% of trees have a published IUCN Red List assessment. Again, many thanks to all of you that have contributed to the Global Tree Assessment along its 10-year-long journey – from the checking of tree lists, to carrying out assessments and to reviewing assessments.

Furthermore, I also want to invite you all to contribute to the new GTSG strategy for 2026-2029, through sharing your ideas and opinion in our [online survey](#) and (if possible) at the workshop at The Morton Arboretum 9-10 March 2025.

Thank you for being an important part of the Global Tree Specialist Group and the wider SSC network, working for the future of trees 🌍🌳

Best wishes,

Malin Rivers

Chair of the Global Tree Specialist Group

GTSG Strategy Development

The timetable for developing this new strategy is as follows:

1st - 14th February	Strategy Survey Membership Survey	Virtual
9th – 10th March	Meeting to set the priority targets, actions and indicators for the upcoming quadrennium	In person
Beginning of April	Webinar for all members to share Draft of GTSG Strategy (2026-2029)	Virtual
1st-14th April	Open for comments on Draft GTSG Strategy (2026-2029)	Virtual
End of April	Final GTSG Strategy shared	Virtual

An in person GTSG Strategy meeting will be held 9-10 March at The Morton Arboretum. All GTSG members are welcome to attend to shape the strategy for the GTSG for the coming quadrennium (2026-2029).

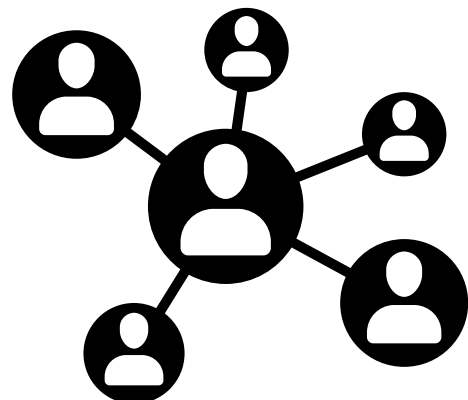
It is important that we receive input from all GTSG members in to this process, so could you ALL please fill in the following two surveys:

1. Strategy survey (not anonymous) - The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the key targets of the last quadrennium and explore new targets for the new quadrennium (2026-2029) – and we will use this information during meeting in Chicago <https://forms.gle/KkZXUeUERJSgfyLNA>
2. Membership survey (anonymous) – The purpose of this survey is to gather general information on our members. This will enable us to better understand our membership, to organize our activities and support the group. (<https://forms.gle/SXBGTQX9a7xmFhiX6>)

Welcome to new GTSG members

A warm welcome to the following new GTSG members. We are pleased to have you join the network.

- Amitha Bachan, India
- Ana Lu MacVean, Guatemala/USA
- Devika M Anilkumar, India
- Dylan Fuller, UK
- Eyen Khoo, Malaysia
- Freddy-Santiago Zenteno-Ruiz, Bolivia
- Irene Zager, Venezuela
- Kathryn Fowler, UK
- Keron Campbell, Jamaica
- Luis Gonzalez Torres, Cuba



ASSESS: Trees a comprehensively assessed group on the IUCN Red List

Following the latest publication of the IUCN Red List in October 2025 at CoP 16 in Colombia, over 80% of tree species (>47,000 species) now have a published IUCN Red List assessment. This is the result of 10 years of work from a group of 1,000 experts including many members of GTSG. Thank you to all of you for your contributions to the assessment process over the years. Trees join other comprehensively assessed groups such as mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. With so much information now available for tree species, we can now use it to prioritise conservation action for the most threatened species. Find out more in this [press release](#).

Assessment work continues for species that remain unassessed, as well as updating assessments as needed. If you spot any errors in published tree assessments, please get in touch with Emily Beech, Red List Authority Coordinator (emily.beech@bgci.org).



PLAN: Conservation planning update

Multi-species conservation planning in Malaysia

Building on previous red listing efforts in the country, conservation practitioners and stakeholders across Malaysia (including Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia) gathered for the workshop entitled “Conservation Planning for Critically Endangered Trees of Malaysia”, at the Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC) in Sepilok from November 11-15, 2024. Facilitated by BGCI and the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group, and funded by Franklinia Foundation, the workshop aimed to harness the collective experiences and expertise from each region to develop a national strategy for tackling the threats and issues effecting Malaysia’s threatened tree flora.



The workshop was attended by key conservation organisations and institutions across the country, many of whom were also involved with BGCI in previous conservation and red listing initiatives. The Sabah Forestry Department co-organised the event, with support from Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability of Malaysia, Forest Research Institute Malaysia, and Forest Department Sarawak. After a week’s worth of intense discussions, participants committed to a joint action plan leveraging their individual strengths and available resources for the future of Malaysia’s botanical heritage, to be published this year.

Conservation planning for plants working group

Led by BGCI, the Morton Arboretum and Atlanta Botanic Garden, all are invited to join a virtual working group covering a range of topics relevant to conservation planning for plants. Two meetings were held at the end of January to introduce the working group and provide an opportunity for feedback. You can watch the meeting recordings here ([January 22](#) and [January 23](#)). You can use [this link](#) to officially sign up to join the working group, so you receive future mailings from us about future meetings, etc.

ACT: Reverse the Red Day

SSC is actively involved in the preparations to celebrate Reverse the Red Day on February 7. This is an annual event to highlight strategies that are recovering species and halting extinctions. There are numerous ways for SSC Members to get involved in Reverse the Red Day

You can find all that information in this link: <https://www.reversethered.org/reverse-the-red-day>



SSC Internal Grants - EDGE project: Prioritising the conservation of monotypic tree species

In 2024, GTSG was awarded an SSC/EDGE grant (EDGE/AZE project: *Prioritising the conservation of monotypic tree species*) to ensure that tree species that are evolutionary distinct, at high risk of extinction and existing in a single site have sufficient information available to enable conservation planning. We combined the prioritisation work of GTA, with analysis by Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) and Evolutionary Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE), focusing on 27 monotypic tree genera (genus that includes only one species).

Twenty-nine people from around the world, both members of the Global Tree Specialist Group and independent species experts, collaborated on this project to undertake Red List assessments and contribute with information. Seven of the 27 tree species were identified to have out-of-date Red List assessments, and four of these were reassessed and submitted to the IUCN Red List Unit, the remaining three are in progress. We were able to compile conservation action information on existing in situ and ex situ conservation actions, and lack thereof, for 20 species, all of which is now available on the [GlobalTree Portal](#). Together with Plant Conservation Action Group and Seychelles Island Foundation, we have also initiated the creation of conservation action plans for four tree species endemic to the Seychelles, and continued collaboration on Red List assessments of trees endemic to the Seychelles.



Photo: *Glionnetia sericea* ©Charles Morel (Seychelles National Herbarium)

Spotlight on a GTSG Member Project: Relict Forest in Fog Oases in South America

Fiorella Gonzales Guillen (fiolitagonz@gmail.com)

My initial encounter with the “arrayan” tree species *Myrcianthes ferreyrae* occurred during my final year at university. During a conference, a professor mentioned the existence of this endemic tree, emphasizing its restricted distribution to certain “fog oasis” of Arequipa, Peru. Intrigued by this information, and armed only with a printed photograph and a few coordinates, I embarked on a journey with two friends in 2011 to explore these fog oases in search of this remarkable species.

Fog oases, also known as coastal lomas, are isolated plant communities sustained by the deposition of advective fog, which occurs on steep coastal slopes below 1000 meters above sea level. These unique ecosystems are found at elevations ranging from 200 to 1200 meters and are distributed like islands within the hyperarid Peruvian-Chilean coastal desert, extending from 7° to 30°S in South America.



Arrayan trees evaluated in Taimara coastal loma
©Fiorella Gonzales

Each fog oasis is unique, varying in plant composition, size, topography, and proximity to the ocean. Plant endemism within these oases is notable, estimated at approximately 30% in Peru and 67% in Chile.

The vegetation of fog oases is dominated by a mixture of annual and perennial grasses, herbs, shrubs, and small populations of trees. Among these, the presence of tree species in fog oases stands out as particularly remarkable. Some tree species found in fog oases include *Caesalpinia spinosa*, *Capparis prisca*, *Acacia macracantha*, and *Myrcianthes ferreyrae*. Their branches often host an abundance of mosses and lichens, which provide a substrate for the growth of ferns, and epiphytes like *Peperomia* sp. and *Tillandsia* sp. Coastal fog is intercepted by the treetops and their associated epiphytes, where water droplets condense and travel down the tree trunks to the ground. This process significantly alters microclimatic conditions in this hyperarid desert, creating a more favorable environment for the establishment and growth of various plant species.



Fog oases view of Atiquipa-September 2024
©Fiorella Gonzales



Flowering “arrayan” tree in Atiquipa-September 2024
©Fiorella Gonzales

Myrcianthes ferreyrae, a perennial species of the Myrtaceae family, is found at elevations ranging from 100 to 1,000 meters above sea level in some localities of the Caravelí province in Arequipa, Peru. This species was described by McVaugh in 1958. In addition to being both endemic and rare, it is classified as Critically Endangered (CR), highlighting its critical conservation status. Historically the “arrayan” forest was continuous along the fog oases of Atiquipa and Taimara. The last decades several authors have reported a low population density for this species. The most recent inventory, conducted in 2012, of its population reported only 586 individuals, in addition to a considerable number of individuals cut down and dead standing. As good news, some of the trees recorded in the 2012 census are still standing in 2024. Although we have not conducted a new tree census, we hope to do so by applying for new funding.

Fog oases face significant threats from land use changes, including deforestation, overgrazing and urban expansion. These anthropogenic pressures are aggravated by climate changes, such as increasing temperatures and decreasing precipitation in coastal regions, which accelerate desertification processes. Consequently, these changes drive the loss of biodiversity, as well as ecosystem functions and services. In particular, overgrazing, a practice that has persisted since colonial times, continues to place considerable pressure on these fragile ecosystems, further exacerbating their vulnerability to environmental change. *Myrcianthes ferreyrae* encounters additional challenges due to its low natural regeneration capacity. This limitation is linked to its recalcitrant seeds and the effects of herbivory, which impede seedling establishment. In Atiquipa coastal lomas, some local residents have made efforts to propagate the species using seeds and traditional methods.

However, these practices are being lost. Another significant concern is the limited knowledge of the ecology and biology of *M. ferreyrae*, as well as its ecological role, which further complicates its conservation.

Last year, as part of my doctorate, I studied the climatic and biogeographical drivers that shapes the communities in fog oases. It was made possible thanks to my first encounter with fog oasis while studying the “arrayan”. Currently, I am evaluating whether positive interactions occurs in fog oases. To this end, we are working with plots, collecting soil samples, analyzing functional traits, and measuring changes in species richness within and outside potential facilitator species.

We aspire that our published work studying fog oasis, as well as our future findings, can contribute to the knowledge of species like the “arrayan”, which form part of these unique ecosystems that are so threatened by climate change and desertification. This brief note is an invitation for readers of this newsletter to take an interest in these incredible ecosystems and the species they host.

My work in coastal lomas was supported by the E032-117-2017 Doctorate Scholarship Grant from PROCIENCIA/CONCYTEC-PERU

Spotlight on a GTSG Member: S.K. Ganesan PhD

I am a taxonomic botanist at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, specialising in several big-tree families, including the Anacardiaceae (mango family), Dipterocarpaceae (dipterocarp or damar family) and the Malvaceae (which includes the durians and sterculias). I have provided ad hoc advice on the taxonomy of these families for the IUCN SSC Global Tree Specialist Group. I have been a member of this group for 6 years (since 2018), during which time I authored or co-authored more than 100 global conservation assessments and reviewed many more. I am also a member of the Global Dipterocarp Consortia. In addition to botany, I had early training as a forester and later served in urban forestry with the National Parks Board, Singapore, where I was involved in policy initiatives like the 'Heritage Trees Scheme', increasing urban tree biodiversity and application of forest ecology principles to urban plantings. I have also been a Certified Arborist with the International Society for Arboriculture for many years and served as the founding president of the Singapore Arboriculture Society. I am interested in the native flora and inherent nature of the vegetation and floristics of the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore, as well as that of Borneo and surrounding areas. As someone naturally interested in plant classification, culture, and utilisation, I am a Principal Researcher in Plant Taxonomy.



I also head the Centre for Ethnobotany at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, contributing to the Flora of Singapore and adjacent territories. My interests include the history of science and the impact of culture on conservation, particularly in the Southeast Asian region, including Singapore. I am well-versed in the cultural history of South and Southeast Asia and draw comparisons among the philosophies from these places with those of East Asia and the West. A recent book I co-authored is *The Botanists of the Singapore Botanic Gardens—The First Hundred Years*. This book was announced in the previous issue of the GTC newsletter.

Keep in Touch

Please let us know what you have been up to and share news with the Group

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Check out the [GTA website](https://www.globaltreeassessment.org/) for updates

