Humans have been dependent on wild plant communities for thousands of years. Plants provide the air we breathe, the fibers that clothe us, the smells that intoxicate us, the medicines that heal us, and the beauty and inspiration that remind us we are all truly alive and interconnected. And how do we reciprocate? For the most part, we bury them under concrete and asphalt. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that more than 30,000 varieties of plant life worldwide are now in imminent danger of extinction because of the loss of their habitat due to urban sprawl and deforestation.

But, all does not have to be lost! There are people and organizations working right now to save as many medicinal plants as possible.

The United Plant Savers (UpS) is one such organization. Their mission is “to protect native medicinal plants of the United States and Canada and their native habitat while ensuring an abundant renewable supply of medicinal plants for generations to come.” To help do so, they generate lists of wild medicinal plants currently most impacted by human activities.

Their lists are printed at right; in parentheses you’ll find some of the common medicinal uses for these herbs.

**What can you do to protect these wild medicinals?**

North Carolina Plant Savers is the local and regional friend of the UpS. NCpS is a group of herbalists, gardeners, teachers, nature lovers and others dedicated to preserving, renewing and protecting the state’s rare wealth of medicinal plants and their habitats.

If you have one of these medicinals on your property or construction site, call NCpS to come out and identify and rescue the plant. You can volunteer with the group—opportunities are available to help with plant rescue, plant identification, medicine making and more—and join NCpS as well! The local chapter meets the first Monday of the month at 6 pm at Asheville Pizza & Brewing Company on Merrimon Avenue. Visit www.main.nc.us/ncps, or contact Amy Steiner at 828-301-0351 or amy@savoirherbals.com for more information.

### To-Watch” List

These plants need to be closely monitored due to over-harvest and loss of habitat.

- Arnica (lowers abnormally elevated blood pressure)
- Cascara Sagrada (promotes bowel movement)
- Chaparro Amargosa (active inhibitor of intestinal protozoa)
- Elephant Tree (supports and stimulates respiratory function)
- Gentian (increases deficient appetite)
- Goldthread (improves digestion and promotes appetite)
- Kava Kava (eases cramping in smooth muscles)
- Lobelia (strongly relieves pain)
- Maidenhair Fern (pectoral conditions of coughs from colds)
- May Apple (tones, strengthens and increases bile flow)
- Oregon Grape (improves acidity of stomach secretions)
- Partridge Berry (female reproductive tonic)
- Pink Root (active and potent against parasites)
- Pipsissewa (as poultice to aid congestive inflammation)
- Pleurisy Root (removes excess mucous in response to infection)
- Spikenard (aids the body to adapt around stress)
- Stone Root (pelvic vasculature tonic)
- Stream Orchid (mood elevating antispasmodic for deficient constitution)
- Turkey Corn (general analgesic pain reliever to the CNS)
- White Sage (prevents or retards microorganism growth)
- Wild Indigo (cleans up toxic debris and strengthens constitution)
- Yerba Mansa (retards or prevents microorganism growth)

### Author’s note: The uses listed for these herbs are for educational purposes only and are not intended to cure or treat disease.

Sources: www.wwf.org, www.unitedplantsavers.org

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### “At-Risk” List

These plants are “at-risk” due to over-harvest, loss of habitat or by the nature of their innate rareness or sensitivity.

- American Ginseng (increases resistance to stress)
- Black Cohosh (alleviates muscular tension)
- Bloodroot (kills or inhibits fungus growth)
- Blue Cohosh (stimulates menses flow and activity)
- Echinacea (helps body destroy pathogens and microorganisms)
- Eyebright (for head colds, allergies and moderate histamine reactions)
- False Unicorn (inhibits abortive tendencies)
- Goldenseal (supports natural waste elimination)
- Lady’s Slipper Orchid (calms nervous tension and irritability)
- Lomatium (stimulates innate immunity, drains lymph)
- Osha (aids body’s natural immunity, reduces fever)
- Peyote (sacred Native medicine)
- Slippery Elm (neutralizes excess acid in stomach and intestines)
- Sundew (relaxes muscle tension)
- Trillium, Beth Root (stops uterine hemorrhage)
- True Unicorn (helps tonify kidney function)
- Venus’ Fly Trap (anticancer, immune support activity)
- Virginia Snakeroot (relieves pain in stomach and breasts)
- Wild Yam (stimulates flow of bile from liver)