New York Natural Heritage Program
Rare Plant Reintroduction Policy

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The best way to protect rare plants is to protect them where they grow naturally.

While some successful reintroductions have taken place and have helped preserve rare plant species, others have failed or had unintended consequences including:

1. Promoting or reinforcing the view that rare plants can easily be moved away from habitat destruction.
2. Promoting the view that easily propagated plants can easily survive in the wild and their natural habitats are not necessary for their survival.
3. Obscuring biogeographic patterns by moving plants into areas where they never occurred or were extirpated.
4. Misallocation of conservation funds to introduced populations instead of natural populations.
5. Unintended genetic mixing of reintroduced populations with native populations causing loss of original, locally evolved, genetic stock.
6. Introduction of pathogens or non-native weeds from potting soil.
7. Complication of protection lawsuits because presently, New York rare plant the law does not distinguish between native and non-native populations.

Key problems with methodology also remain including:

1. Unproven methods and lack of long-term data that suggest specific reintroduction methods will work.
2. Lack of study and action to the root cause of a species' decline because it has been moved elsewhere.

Therefore, it is the policy of the New York Natural Heritage Program that:

Reintroduction should only be considered if habitat protection is not possible and the species is in danger of becoming extirpated at the site, in the state, or in the ecoregion.

Reintroductions should only be done with careful and detailed attention to techniques and documentation. Long-term monitoring is essential.

Introduction of rare plants should not take place in natural areas or areas of the state where they were never documented.

Greenhouse propagation of rare plants should not be undertaken for undocumented public distribution.

Rare plant propagation should be studied and used for educational and scientific purposes but should be considered experimental in nature.

Introduction of rare plants into adjacent areas of known occurrences, to augment populations, can be done as long as propagules from the same or nearby populations are used and procedures are documented in detail.