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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Rare plant list will be land-use management tool" (1983). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 8310. <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/8310>

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MEDIA RELEASE

holmquist/ny
6-15-83
state + weeklies

RARE PLANT LIST WILL BE LAND-USE MANAGEMENT TOOL

MISSOULA--

A list of the state's rare plants that can serve as a land-use management tool is being compiled at the University of Montana as part of a project organized by Peter Lesica, a UM botony researcher.

Lesica is a member of a team that is collecting and editing descriptions of plants, maps and other material that will indicate which Montana plants are rare or endangered in particular localities. This information, gathered from plant scientists around the state, can be used to develop land-management plans that will protect such plants.

"These plants are indicators of rare habitats," Lesica said. "They point out that there may be other rare species, like animals, in the same habitat."

He said the habitats and species are important because they form a part of the ecological gene pool, important for research and use in genetics, gene banks, chemical substances, and disease and pest resistance.

"The amount of money used to save rare plants is trivial compared to their potential economic value," Lesica said.

Lesica has been working on the "Montana Rare Plant Project" with botanists at the University of Montana and the MSU herbarium curator John Rumely. Other members of the UM team include Kathleen Peterson, UM assistant professor of botany, and researchers Klaus Lackschewitz, Jerry Moore, John Pierce and Virginia Vincent.

MONTANA'S RARE PLANTS TO BE LISTED--add one

The team has asked plant scientists in the state what species might be considered rare and has edited their answers into a list that now contains several hundred plants. Most of this work has been volunteer.

The researchers also have investigated herbarium collections at UM, MSU, Glacier National Park and the University of Washington, Seattle, for unpublished and historical specimen information. A \$3,000 grant from the Nature Conservancy office in Helena, a branch of the national private conservation organization, helped to pay for the herbaria research.

Currently the researchers are preparing a final revision and annotation of the list and are determining what species should be listed as endangered within the state's borders. Once this portion of the project is completed, they will be ready to publish the list.

Lesica is applying for money from state and federal agencies to pay for printing and distributing the list.

He says this project should encourage the gathering of more botanical information about Montana, which is one of the least botanically known states in America.

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