

Assigning Disaster Priorities to Your Collection

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In case of disaster, the more prepared you are for response, the better your collection will fare. In a perfect world, you would save all the plants in the collection. But this is not always possible. Assigning priority levels to your accessions and storing this information in your plant records database will help you determine which plants need special protection or genetic replacements in case of disaster. This information will also allow you to evaluate and critically look at your collection's strengths and weaknesses. Accession priority levels will help you when building collections and when undergoing garden renovation.

Disaster Preparedness Inventory

Every accession in the collection will be reviewed and a priority level assigned. The plant records staff will provide lists of plants based on geographical location in the garden. This list will include:

- Accession number
- Name
- Current location
- Current number of plants
- Lineage number
- Last check date
- Plant source
- Provenance type
- IUCN conservation code

The staff responsible for plants in those locations will review the entire list and assign a priority level to each accession. In some cases physical inventory of the plant(s) is necessary, based on the last check date in the plant records system. If the date is greater than three years, it is recommended that the accession's condition is verified.

Use the following criteria to assign a disaster priority level:

High Priority will be assigned to accessions that are impossible to replace. These accessions may be rare in the wild and or in cultivation. They may be rare based on their age, and/or may be historically or scientifically significant to your garden or the horticulture community.

Medium Priority will be assigned to accessions that are difficult or expensive to replace based on their monetary worth, size or availability in commerce.

Low Priority will be assigned to accessions that are easy and inexpensive to replace.

No Priority will be assigned to accessions that would not be replaced.

Once each accession has a priority assigned, the plant records staff and volunteers will enter the priority level to the accession records in the plant records database.

The plant records office will assist in determining priority or existence of accessions by offering maps and complete database records, but it will be up to the staff member in each location to complete the inventory.

Once assigning priority to a section of the garden is complete, then all new accessions assigned to those locations will receive priority upon accessioning.