

Report: 1 in 5 plant species face extinction

By Ben Guarino, Washington Post

Plants pervade almost every part of human life – not only do we eat them and wear them, we use plants for fuel, medicine, building materials, poisons and intoxicants.

To limit the world's plants to those that meet a human need, however, would be doing the leafy kingdom a disservice. In fact, according to a report from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, in the United Kingdom, only a slice of plant life is "useful" to humans. In what Kew is calling the first comprehensive assessment of plant life – the first annual "State of the World's Plants" – researchers determined that some 30,000 plant species had a documented use.

As many as one in five plants may be at risk of extinction, the scientists say, due to invasive species, disease and changing landscapes.

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