Dr. Peter Dunwiddie, TNC, setting fire to prairie grasses using a driptorch /Photo: J. Lantor, USFWS

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Golden Paintbrush
(Castilleja levisecta)
Recovering the Gem of the Pacific Northwest Grasslands

The ESA brings attention to this declining species and its habitat.
- It protects the plant on federal lands or wherever a federal permit or federal funding is involved.
- A recovery plan provides guidance for recovery actions.
- Listing a species under ESA focuses funding to state agencies and others to implement recovery and acquire habitat for the species.
- It protects the plant from import and export and prohibits commercial trade.

Federal ESA regulations do not require a private citizen to protect a threatened or endangered plant on their property, as long as they comply with state laws and regulations.

However, you can help:
- Mow the site twice each year, once in October and once in February, to reduce competing plants and sustain and encourage paintbrush.
- Count plants in spring or early summer.
- Collect seed or seed capsules in August or September.
- Report your count and contribute collected seed to one of the agencies listed on the back of this brochure.
- Enjoy the plants — golden paintbrush is a gorgeous, colorful plant. Lands with golden paintbrush are unique places.

What do I do if I find it on my property?
If you find golden paintbrush on your property, please notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Washington Natural Heritage Program, or the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center. These agencies will work with you to promote the species’ recovery through active management.

All conservation actions for plants on private property are voluntary. Local planning ordinances may apply.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking assistance from public and private landowners to find new populations of this bright and beautiful plant.

For more information or to report golden paintbrush sightings, contact any one of the following:

Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center, Oregon State University 503/731 3070
Washington Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program 360/902 1710
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office 360/753 9440
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office 503/231 6179

This brochure was conceived by the USFWS and Florence Caplow (WDNR). We acknowledge the contributions of the Golden Paintbrush Technical Team of Joe Arnett, Peter Dunwiddie, Ed Guerrant, and Thomas Kaye.

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Golden paintbrush is a symbol of the native northwest grasslands, an ecosystem that has been reduced by more than 90%. Like the grassland habitat that sustains them, golden paintbrush populations have decreased dramatically. Formerly found in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, the paintbrush has been reduced to fewer than 11 populations in Washington and Canada. It is believed to be entirely absent in Oregon.

We need your help to recover the golden paintbrush. We have protected the plant as a threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act and developed a recovery plan to guide management actions and reverse the decline of the plant and its habitat.

The Golden paintbrush is part of the larger Puget Sound-Willamette Valley Grassland ecosystem, the most rapidly-declining ecosystem in the Pacific Northwest. When an ecosystem is disrupted, its health is compromised and species may be lost. Such losses diminish the quality and diversity of the world in which we live. The golden paintbrush is an important part of a healthy Puget Sound-Willamette Valley ecosystem.

Golden paintbrush grows in Pacific Northwest lowlands. Historically it occurred on grasslands on islands in Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia in Canada, and south into the Willamette Valley of Oregon. It grows best on open sites without shade and competition from trees, shrubs and non-native grasses.

Oxeye daisy (left) and Douglas-fir (below) encroach upon golden paintbrush habitat, outcompeting golden paintbrush for space and light, creating unsuitable habitat.

What should I care about golden paintbrush?

Why should I care about golden paintbrush?

The golden paintbrush grows in Pacific Northwest lowlands. Historically it occurred on grasslands on islands in Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia in Canada, and south into the Willamette Valley of Oregon. It grows best on open sites without shade and competition from trees, shrubs and non-native grasses.

The invasive shrub Scot’s broom aggressively occupies grasslands via transportation corridors.

How did golden paintbrush become so rare?

Golden paintbrush disappears when its habitat is converted to other uses or invaded by plants that compete with it. Scot’s broom and other non-native shrubs, invasive weeds such as Hairy Cat’s Ear or the noxious weed Oxeye Daisy, and Douglas-fir invade prairies, crowding or shading out golden paintbrush.

Where would I find golden paintbrush?

We need your help to recover the golden paintbrush. We have protected the plant as a threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act and developed a recovery plan to guide management actions and reverse the decline of the plant and its habitat.

Now we are seeking information about golden paintbrush populations in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

We also need your help to protect this rare species where it exists. Golden paintbrush recovery cannot be accomplished on state and federal lands alone. The participation of private landowners will be a key part of preserving the species.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies and landowners, such as the Department of Defense, National Park Service, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy are working together to prioritize conservation actions that protect the species on their land and they are working with landowners to do the same on their land. These actions include:

- Identify best management practices to protect and improve the health of the grassland ecosystem
- Remove trees and shrubs
- Mow or burn grasslands to reduce competition by non-native grasses.

What is being done to conserve the golden paintbrush?

We need your help.

Ebbe’s bluff, Whidbey Island

Above: Trials Island, Canada ©Washington National Heritage Program

Right: Golden paintbrush and red columbine, San Juan Island, Washington