

Golden Paintbrush

(Castilleja levisecta)

*Recovering
the Gem of the
Pacific Northwest
Grasslands*





What is golden paintbrush?

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.

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

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.

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.

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



Why should I care about golden paintbrush?

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.

Where would I find golden paintbrush?

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.



Above: Trials Island, Canada
©Washington Natural Heritage Program

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



Ebey's bluff, Whidbey Island

What is being done to conserve the golden paintbrush?

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 vegetation





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



A successful prairie burn removes competing vegetation / Photo: J. Lantor, USFWS



Planting golden paintbrush to enhance

How does the Endangered Species Act (ESA) protect golden paintbrush?

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.

How can private citizens help recover or manage for the long-term welfare of golden paintbrush?

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?



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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 STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

**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**

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