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## Amazing Species: Saguaro

The **Saguaro**, *Carnegiea gigantea*, is listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. It occurs in Sonora, Mexico, and in Arizona and California in the United States, where it is locally abundant. This iconic cactus, known from many Western films, can grow up to 18 m and can live up to 200 years. In Arizona, where its blossom is the official state flower, Saguaros form entire forests.

The main threat to the Saguaro is the loss of habitat caused predominantly by cattle ranching in Mexico and urban expansion in the United States. The effects of competition and fires associated with the invasive Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) further contribute to its decline. The high demand for Saguaros' ribs, their woody internal frame, is also leading to their over-collection from the wild for indiscriminate and illegal trade.

The Saguaro receives protection through the strict control of international trade under its listing on Appendix II of the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and through the European Union Wildlife Trade Regulation. In Mexico it is legally protected by the national list of species at risk of extinction. Several protected areas lie within its range, notably the Saguaro National Park in Arizona.



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