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Geographical range

Amazing Species: Queen of the Andes

The **Queen of the Andes**, *Puya raimondii*, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. This spectacular high-Andean plant is endemic to Peru and Bolivia and typically occurs at an elevation of around 4,000 m. The largest member of the pineapple family, it produces nature's tallest flower spike, to 10 m or even more, and has leaves with fierce inwardly-curving claws that are said to ensnare grazing animals.

The Queen of the Andes is susceptible to threatening events because its communities are generally small and very isolated from each other. Populations are extremely similar genetically which renders the species vulnerable to climate change, disease, parasites and predation. The major current threat in most communities, however, is human impact which includes the use of fire to generate or maintain pasture land.

Efforts are underway to identify at least the larger specimens of this plant to generate a full habitat inventory and further research is needed to gain more information on the species. The Queen of the Andes' dramatic appearance and tolerance of a wide range of growing conditions also makes it suitable for landscaping in much of the warm temperate to subtropical world and its dissemination should be encouraged.

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