



CITES - not just for the birds

CITES may be most famous for controlling trade in charismatic animals, but most of the species covered by CITES are actually plants. Nearly 30,000 species of plant, ranging from huge trees to tiny cacti, are protected.

Timber

Trade in several commercially valuable timber species is regulated by CITES. The main timber imports into the European Union (EU) are:

- **African Teak**, a dark wood from Central Africa used for flooring, furniture and boatbuilding.
- **Big-leaf Mahogany** and **Spanish Cedar** from Mexico, Central and South America are used to make furniture and musical instruments such as drums and guitars.
- **Ramin**, originating in Malaysia and Indonesia, a pale wood used for furniture, window blinds and picture frames.

These tree species are all globally threatened. When buying a timber product, check whether it came from a sustainable source.

Ornamental Plants

Exotic and colourful plants, such as orchids and cacti, are often used to decorate homes and gardens. However, trade in these popular plants is, in fact, regulated by CITES.

Some popular plants like cyclamens and snowdrops are commonly harvested in the wild and monitoring of the trade can help prevent over-exploitation. Many plants, however, can now be artificially propagated, reducing the pressure on wild populations. Regulation of this trade is less strict than for wild-sourced plants.

Medicinal Plants

Trade in medicinal plants, such as hoodia, which is used as an appetite suppressant, and ginseng, a stimulant found in energy drinks, is also regulated by CITES.