

Miami Herald Science Writer Mike Toner did a January round-up story detailing the economic benefits that have accrued and that yet may accrue from successful efforts to save endangered plant species. He described "stunted, misshapen stalks of something that vaguely resembled corn plants, growing on an inconspicuous hillside in Mexico" that turned out to be the last few thousand stalks of one of the most ancient and remarkable ancestors of the modern corn plant. This newly discovered plant, unlike modern varieties of corn, is a perennial. It can survive high altitude and resist at least eight different diseases that regularly decimate modern varieties of corn. Eventually, the benefits of hybridization and cross breeding may save U.S. farmers as much as \$4 billion in plowing costs alone.

Dr. Norman Farnsworth, University of Illinois pharmacologist, is quoted: "Few people realize that 25 percent of all prescription drugs dispensed in the U.S. contain active ingredients that are extracted from higher plants. And since less than 5,000 plant species have been thoroughly investigated for the presence of useful drugs, we ought to ask ourselves how many new drugs remain to be discovered."

The guyaule plant, considered little more than a weed in the Southwest, may someday provide such a rich source of natural rubber. The Toner article says "that the U.S. could be significantly less dependent on the oil it now uses to make synthetic rubber."

Undersecretary of State James Buckley's November 1981 address to a Washington, D.C. conference is quoted too: "Based on what we know, the needless extinction of a single species is an act of recklessness. The process is tantamount to book burning, but it is worse in that it involves books yet to be deciphered and read."