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Wild plants provide many services that benefit life on Earth. For example, wild plants form ecosystems that sustain our existence; offer food resources to many types of life forms; produce medicines used by humans; and deliver clothing, shelter, aesthetic appeal, and industrial uses. Wild plants

are progenitors of current crops and also serve as a repository of genetic information that is utilized for improving crop production and yield. However, wild plant biodiversity is being lost rapidly due to many human-induced factors. Very little is known about the seed biology of wild plants thereby further complicating the problem of biodiversity loss. Dr. Pérez aims to begin closing the significant gap that exists in our understanding of wild plant seed biology by addressing the following research themes: 1) how do seeds interact with a changing climate to alleviate dormancy and promote germination; 2) what enables seeds to retain viability in the face of abiotic stressors; and 3) why does seed quality vary in seeds of wild plants? Research from all themes merge under the over-arching theme of ex situ conservation in order to advance conservation practice.

Global Research Interests

- Germplasm conservation (native flora, crop wild relatives, small stakeholder crops, palms)
- Influence of abiotic stressors on seed quality
- Impact of changing climate on germination ecology of keystone species
- Palm conservation

Countries of Focus

- Cuba
- Costa Rica
- Panama
- Nicaragua
- Ecuador
- Caribbean Countries

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