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SF plant thought extinct found near Golden Gate

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(12-14) 15:53 PST San Francisco, CA (AP) --

A San Francisco native plant that was believed to be extinct has been discovered near the Golden Gate Bridge.

The last, wild Franciscan Manzanita was believed to have perished in the 1940s when the city cemeteries where it grew were moved south to allow for neighborhood expansion.

But when construction crews recently cleared eucalyptus trees in the city's Presidio area, it exposed the only specimen known to exist in the wild.

Botanist Daniel Gluesenkamp spotted the manzanita shrub in the Presidio, a federal park overseen by the National Park Service.

Gluesenkamp reportedly spotted the rare shrub, which he was familiar with through his scientific work, as he drove from the Golden Gate Bridge into the Presidio. He later visited the site to confirm his sighting — the first in nearly 70 years.

"Finding this wild plant under our noses gives us a fantastic opportunity to protect this indigenous plant and to restore it," said Brent Plater, executive director of the Wild Equity Institute.

Plater and other environmental groups filed a petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the plant under the Endangered Species Act.

Plater said he did not expect the plant's discovery to affect the nearly \$1.5 billion replacement of Doyle Drive, the south access road to the Golden Gate Bridge.

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