



Maryland Native Plant Program Fact Sheet

Senate Bill 836/House Bill 950

Issue:

The significant decline in pollinators and other wildlife species requires our immediate intervention. Of the 100 crop species that supply 90% of human nutrition, over 70 require bee pollination.¹ Many native plants are keystones in the food web and necessary for the survival of crucial pollinators. When these plants are unavailable, entire ecosystems become unstable, and the food chain is vulnerable to collapse. Our ability to feed humans depends on us sustaining the food web.

Americans are starting to get the message, as over 67 million Americans reported buying a plant to benefit bees, butterflies, or birds. The most visited page on the University of Maryland Extension website in 2022 was *Recommended Native Plants for Maryland* (up 700% over 5 years), and articles on native plants are increasing in the press. The challenge is how to provide an authoritative source on what is native *where we live* and clear identification of those plants at retailers. Marylanders need and want this information to better support the environment.

What This Bill Will Do:

- Establish a “Maryland Native Plants” program through the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the University of Maryland Extension (UME).
- Create a consumer friendly, but voluntary, labeling program and logo to identify a plant as a “Maryland Native” on plant tags, pots, and point-of-sale signage.
- Develop an online list of Maryland native plants eligible for labeling in coordination with the MDA, DNR, UME and Maryland Native Plant Society.
- Create a Maryland grower/retailer certification program promoted through the Maryland Best Program to help Marylanders to buy and retailers to sell native plants.
- Educate the public on the benefits of planting Maryland native plants. Many are already looking for natives, but plants usually lack consumer friendly labeling and information.
- Promote through media, MDA/UME/DNR websites and environmental groups.
- Position Maryland as a leader in promoting native plants and help create new business.
- Complement 2022 legislation (HB15/SB7) that focused on reducing invasive plants

¹ United Nations. (2011, March). *Humans Must Change Behaviour to Save Bees, Vital for Food Production – UN report | UN news*. United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/03/368622>



Did you know?

- One million species are at risk of extinction worldwide. In the last 40+ years, wildlife populations have declined by 60 percent due to habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental factors.² Scientifically, we are in the sixth mass extinction.
- North American birds have declined by a staggering 3 billion (nearly 30%) over the past 50 years, and our iconic Monarch butterflies are now endangered.³ Without significant intervention, we can expect further bird and butterfly declines.
- The majority of insects and other animals have coevolved to be dependent on specific native plants. Maryland develops thousands of acres of land annually for housing, hardscape, and commercial usage, constantly destroying native trees and other plants.
- Native pollinators are critical to sustain our food production and to keep food prices affordable. Without pollination, many foods simply can't grow.
- By choosing to plant native plants in commercial, residential and park settings, we can significantly improve the odds of survival of native pollinators, wildlife, and us.
- Native plants manage stormwater, control sediment, and help Bay health.

Why now?



Tag Designs: Amanda Wray

We should start this program now to support and educate Marylanders so they can help save our pollinators and other native wildlife. With 86% of all land east of the Mississippi in private control, we need to educate everyone on the importance of choosing Maryland natives.⁴ We've already lost too many species and even our state bird, the Baltimore oriole, is declining at a precipitous rate.

Our children and grandchildren deserve to wake up to bird song whether they reside in our cities, suburbs, or rural areas of our state. They should see butterflies and bees, and most importantly their parents should be able to provide them with affordable Maryland grown food. Each year of delay imperils

more of our Maryland native pollinators and other species, and reduces our chances of saving future generations

Click the QR code to see it work!

² *Living planet report 2018*. WWF. (2018). <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/living-planet-report-2018>

³ *Science.org*. Decline of North American Avifauna, 2019, <https://www.science.org/cms/asset/ea3592d2-58d6-4a7c-b50f-67b697d7833f/pap.pdf>

⁴ Tallamy, Douglas W., 2020, *Nature's Best Hope*, p.25.