



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 15

Invasive and Native Plants – Classification, Listing, Use, and Sales and Use Tax

Date: January 26, 2022

Position: **Support**

To: Ways and Means, Environment and Transportation From: Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 15, which requires State agencies to prioritize using plants native to Maryland in planting projects and exempts the sale of native plants from sales and use tax.

Native species provide ecosystem benefits that strengthen mitigation and restoration efforts.

Environmental restoration, including tree and shrub plantings, is part of the State of Maryland's efforts to meet Maryland's Chesapeake Watershed Implementation Plan. The State also completes plantings to mitigate clear-cutting for new transportation infrastructure and helps to fund local government restoration projects. This legislation ensure that these plantings will be native species that provide the greatest ecosystem benefits.

The resiliency and adaptability of native species reduces the need for fertilizer and pesticide use, lessening the potential for pollutant runoff in the Bay.

The specific adaptations of native plants allow them to flourish in the region with little to no fertilizer. They are more resistant to insects and disease therefore do not require many, if any pesticides. Planting natives in the Bay region reduces the chances of harmful fertilizer and pesticide runoff into the Bay.

Native plants provide food and cover for wildlife that are critical to the Bay region's ecosystem.

Native plants naturally occur in the region in which they have evolved and support other species in the local ecosystem. Local wildlife, such as birds, insects, and mammals are also critically dependent on native plant communities (the zebra swallowtail butterfly, for example, feeds almost exclusively on pawpaw trees during its larval stage).

Non-native plants may become invasive species that threaten ecosystems and create additional hurdles to conservation.

Non-native plants are often not in balance with the local ecosystem and may take over large swaths of land, creating monoculture zones that threaten wildlife living in the local ecosystem. Removal of non-natives can be costly. The Maryland State Highway Administration has spent substantial funding in the removal of non-native plant species along highways and wetland restoration projects.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service natives guide may inform development of a list of native species

HB 15 references the US Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office list of plant invaders. However, the Field Office also offers a comprehensive listing of native plants in the Chesapeake region including trees, shrubs, grasses, ferns and wetland plants.¹ This list may be a helpful reference for the Department in carrying out the legislation's requirement to create a list of plant species native to the State. The guide may also help state agencies and other entities that receive state funding to prioritize native plantings as it lists the various conditions on which these native plants will thrive. These conditions consist of the sunlight requirements, moisture and soil conditions, and preferred region (coastal plain, piedmont, mountains) for each native.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 15. For more information, please contact Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

¹ [Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2005.](#)