



Maryland Green Industries Council
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Date: March 1, 2023

House Bill 0950 – Maryland Native Plants Program

Committee: Environment and Transportation

MaGIC Position: **Support with Amendment**

The Maryland Green Industry Council, representing nursery, landscape, greenhouse, garden center, and arboriculture professionals is opposed to House Bill 0950 – Maryland Native Plants Program, as written, however would offer support of this bill with amendment. As written, the bill seeks to define a “native plant” as one that does not include a named or unnamed cultivar or hybrid. The amendment proposed is to remove this language, which is found on page 2, lines 13 and 14 of the bill.

The industry as a whole encourages the planting of native plants. Industry values their importance, loves to sell them, and encourages customers to plant them. Plants, however, routinely cross pollinate and hybridize naturally. Natural mutations and variegations occur in native populations, as well. 'Cultivar' names are given to these plants to distinguish their physical differences, but they are no less 'native' than the original plant. Original species can be designated as such, but cultivars should not be excluded as a native.

Cultivars may also be intentionally grown with purpose to create a plant with greater benefit to habitat and the eco-system than the “original” native. Benefit may include such traits as greater fruit yield or enhanced pollination tendencies – characteristics that serve wildlife and the eco-system.

Also of note, cultivars serve to protect the survival of entire species. Case in point, the American Elm population, a tree native to North America, was virtually wiped out after it succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. USDA was successful in developing a disease-resistant cultivar which has enabled the species to be “re-introduced”, and thrive, both in the build landscape and in the wild. For example, the recently planted American Elms on the National Mall in D.C. are products of the disease-resistant cultivars produced originally by USDA. Without the work done to produce a native cultivar, it’s safe to say that the American Elm population in the United States would be on the brink of extinction. And this is just one example of a native species being saved by the production of a native cultivar.

Nurseries and retailers in Maryland seek amendment to this bill to remove the language that exclude cultivars from the definition of a native plant, for the aforementioned reasons. Industry retailers also note that there are a very limited number of businesses that do not grow or sell cultivars. The elimination of “..a plant that is a named or unnamed cultivar or hybrid..” from the proposed Maryland Native Plants Program will effectively quash the program.

MaGIC respectfully requests amendment to HB0950 to remove lines 13 and 14 from page 2 of the bill’s original draft.

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