

Dear Environment and Transportation Committee,

I urge you to support HB0979, the Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act, which will protect our state from the further spread of non-native invasive plants that are destructive to Maryland's ecosystems and wildlife, as well as the agricultural sector.

According to the US Forest Service, invasive species have contributed to the decline of 42% of U.S. endangered and threatened species, and for 18% of U.S. endangered or threatened species, invasives are the main cause of their decline.

Invasive plants are highly destructive to our terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and compete directly with native species for moisture, sunlight, nutrients, and space, often out-competing natives and taking over their niches and habitat, to the detriment of native wildlife and ecosystems.

Invasive plants are now more widely distributed in the U.S. than native plants, and this is thanks not only to their original introduction, but to the fact that we continue to willingly and knowingly reintroduce invasive species on a regular basis by allowing them to be sold in local nurseries.

Why would we knowingly sell products that are destroying our local ecosystems and environment? There is a simple solution here. Simply prohibit their sale. There is no reason that people need to decorate their yards with invasive plants. There are hundreds if not thousands of beautiful native plants that can do the same job while nourishing local wildlife and ecosystems.

Given the immensity of the biodiversity crisis we face and the alarming decline of our wildlife by 70% since 1970, we must prevent non-native invasive species from being propagated by Maryland nurseries and sold by Maryland garden centers. Let's protect and nourish what's left of our precious native plants and animals.

Please vote in favor of HB0979.

Sincerely,
Diana Colangelo
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