

7819 Chelsea St.
Towson, MD 21204

February 26, 2024

I am writing in support of the 2024 Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act (HB 979). I currently lead a group of volunteers who are cutting down invasive vines from the trees growing around the Roland Run Stream in Riderwood, Baltimore County. I began doing this volunteer work in 2017.

It's a horrible feeling to drive along just about any roadway in Maryland and see literally thousands of trees being choked to death by these invasive vines. Just as horrifying is the sight of literally hundreds of invasive miscanthus plants (known as silvergrass, plants that originated in Asia) lining Harford Rd. north of the Beltway in Baltimore County. Bradford pear is another plant that has taken over formerly open areas south of Baltimore. I have worked diligently for ten years to dig up and remove English ivy from my property, and just this week paid thousands of dollars to a landscaping company to root out the English ivy that has proliferated in my lawn. This is spread by birds who eat the berries. I continually must patrol my yard to seek out the tiniest ivy plants that pop up on my lawn. It's insidious and has cost me a lot of money and time to try to remove it.

It's a travesty that these plants are allowed to be sold in garden centers across Maryland. There's really no reason they are allowed to be sold. I am working with friends and colleagues to help educate the public about the link between native plants and our local ecosystem. I chair the Towson Native Garden Contest (nativegardencontest.com), which we will run for the fourth time this year. Once gardeners realize that the plants and trees they choose to put in their own yards have an enduring positive effect on the environment, they want to buy native plants. Garden centers that pay attention can prosper by offering native plants to the gardening public.

Thank you very much.

Best Regards,

Patty Mochel