

Maryland Native Plant Program

The Steve Dubik, Professor, Environmental Horticulture and Sustainable Agribusiness, Montgomery College supports HB 950 with several important amendments.

Native plants are an important category of plants that are responsible for supporting our local ecosystem including pollinators. They are specific to soils and geography and often have ranges that cross state boundaries but are recognizable as native due to their historic presence in a defined area. However, the definition of "Native Plant" as currently written in the definitions of this bill is both problematic and ultimately unenforceable.

One problematic issue is there multiple lists by varying organizations as to what is native to Maryland. One very popular native plant list by the US Fish and Wildlife Service which lists native plants that are native to the Chesapeake Watershed. Because the large size of the Chesapeake Watershed many of these plants are actually native much farther north and not native to Maryland.

In the light of climate change and the influx of invasive diseases and insects many of the plants currently native in Maryland will have problematic future. So plants like our native oaks, ash, American chestnut and Canadian hemlocks will continue to struggle as the climate changes. The fact is more exotic diseases and pests our being introduced to our state and more are expected to come in the future the Asian long horn beetle. The Asian Long Horn Beetle is devastating our native Sugar and Red maples in New England It is only a matter of time before the Asian Long Horn Beetle arrives in Maryland.

The future of many species in Maryland will depend on upon them adapting to these rapid changes in our climate and exotic pests. It is well known that our native plants are struggling to adapt fast enough to keep up with these changes. We need the flexibility of hybridizing our Maryland natives with plants who extend outside the range of Maryland.

We to make sure to included plants like hybrid American chestnut which is cross of the American and Chinese chestnut. They are very close to have a resistant cultivar of American chestnut that has about 5% or less Chinese chestnut in its genome.

Such bill will also exclude Dutch Elm disease resistant cultivars of American elms – like *Ulmus americana* ‘Jefferson’ which was found on Jefferson Street by the Smithsonian castle.

As written, cultivars **and hybrids** of native Maryland plants would be excluded from consideration for inclusion in this program, even though their genetics are native to Maryland. Cultivar is an abbreviation of ‘Cultivated Variety’.

Proposed changes to the definition are below:

- On page 2 line 7 delete “ecosystem, and habitat, without direct or indirect human action” and insert “Ecoregion III, as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- On page 2 line 13 delete ”does not include a plant that is a named or unnamed cultivar of hybrid”, and insert “includes both naturally found and horticulturally produced plants which have the genetics of the plants that are indigenous to Maryland and Ecoregion III as defined by USEPA, including plants that are named selections or hybrids of two Maryland native plants.
- On page 4: at the end of line 17 . add “Plant labeling shall include information to indicate if the plant is seed grown or propagated vegetatively.”

With these proposed changes I Steve Dubik, Professor, Environmental Horticulture and Sustainable Agribusiness support give HB 950 a favorable report