



March 5, 2025

Maryland Native Plant Month (HB 0368)

Dear Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. A core part of our work is operating the Herring Run Nursery, which specializes in plants native to Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **We write today in support of establishing May as Maryland Native Plant Month (HB0368).**

Our non-profit Nursery offers more than 250 native species of trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, and more to retail and wholesale customers alike. Native plants help reduce stormwater pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay by reducing nutrient runoff and requiring fewer chemical inputs than non-native plants. Native plants have deeper root systems than non-natives and are better at stabilizing soils and preventing sediment runoff. Native plants provide critical habitat and food for butterflies, birds, and pollinators. Ecosystem health is increasingly important with rising concerns over climate change and declining pollinator populations. Native plants are an integral part of a healthy and functioning ecosystem.

For more than 15 years, our nursery staff has been engaging and educating Baltimore communities about the many benefits and uses of our indigenous plants. In 2023, I was proud to represent Blue Water Baltimore and offer our support and testimony in favor of the Maryland Native Plant Program. I have been a member of the Maryland Native Plant Program commission since that legislation was passed. An extremely important aspect of the legislation, and a focus of the commission, has been educating the public about native plants. HB 0368 is a natural extension of this education, with the designation of May as Maryland Native Plant Month providing a much more extended spotlight on Maryland native plants.

By designating an entire month to plants indigenous to Maryland, HB 0368 creates an opportunity within the horticulture industry for more sustained, focused, and fun programs educating residents about native plants. The increased interest in native plants will provide the economic benefit of increased spring sales, but even more importantly will engage Marylanders in habits and practices that are beautiful and of benefit to ourselves and our ecosystem.

We urge a favorable report on HB 0368.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Jenkins

Rob Jenkins
Herring Run Nursery Manager