



Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

On behalf of Nurture Natives, I am writing to express strong support for HB217, legislation that would permanently designate May as Maryland Native Plant Month.

Nurture Natives is a youth-led nonprofit dedicated to empowering young people through native biodiversity restoration and environmental education. Since our founding in 2022, we have educated more than 10,000 youth, planted 2.5 million native seeds, and distributed 70,000 seedlings across Maryland. Through this work, we have seen firsthand how native plants can reconnect communities with the landscapes around them while supporting critical ecological restoration.

Maryland is facing urgent environmental challenges. Pollinator populations are declining, waterways across the Chesapeake Bay watershed continue to struggle with pollution and stormwater runoff, and wildlife habitat is shrinking. Native plants are one of the most effective and accessible tools available to address these issues. Their deep root systems stabilize soil, filter pollutants before they reach waterways, and provide essential habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

Designating May as Maryland Native Plant Month would provide a consistent statewide opportunity to educate residents about the importance of native plants and encourage participation in habitat restoration. Importantly, this legislation comes at no cost to taxpayers while supporting Maryland's green economy. A permanent designation also gives nurseries, growers, landscapers, and educators the predictability they need to plan for the peak growing season and expand public engagement.

Young people across the state care deeply about the future of our landscapes and the Chesapeake Bay. At Nurture Natives, we often say that youth deserve a voice in the landscapes that shape us. Students across Maryland are already planting, restoring, and educating their communities about biodiversity. HB217 is an opportunity for the state to support and amplify that momentum.

For these reasons, Nurture Natives strongly urges a favorable report of HB217.

Sincerely,
Esther Bonney
Founder and Director
Nurture Natives