



**HB217 General Provisions - Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month  
Government, Labor and Elections Committee**

**March 17, 2026**

**FAVORABLE**

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and Honorable Members of the Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance strongly supports HB217 establishing May as Maryland Native Plant Month. This designation will increase public knowledge and understanding of the ecological importance of native species. As awareness grows, residents are more likely to seek out and purchase native plants and to spend more on them than on non-native alternatives (1,2). This heightened demand helps activate and strengthen the local economic engine of native plant nurseries and related businesses across Maryland, creating both environmental and economic benefits for our communities.

Native plants are vital to ecosystem survival. Between 78–94% of flowering plants depend on pollinators for reproduction (3), and native plants provide the nectar and pollen that native bees and butterflies need to survive (4). As native flora disappears, pollinators have declined dramatically; North American bumblebee populations have fallen by up to 96% (5), threatening both wild plants and agricultural crops.

Birds depend on native plants. 96% of terrestrial bird species feed insects to their young, and native trees such as oaks support hundreds of caterpillar species, while non-native trees support fewer than a dozen (6,7). Habitat loss has contributed to a 30% decline in North American bird populations since 1970, nearly 3 billion birds (8). Native plants are crucial for soil, water, and climate health. Their deep roots stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and prevent sediment pollution in waterways (9,10), while non-native landscaping requires fertilizers and pesticides that contaminate groundwater (11,12). Native plants filter air pollutants and store carbon in extensive root systems (13), with native forests sequestering far more carbon below ground than non-native vegetation (14).

Protecting and restoring native plants is a matter of ecological survival. Continued reliance on non-native species threatens biodiversity, food security, and environmental stability. Establishing Maryland Native Plant Month will not only raise awareness and accelerate restoration of critical ecosystems, but will also stimulate demand for native plants, strengthening Maryland's nursery industry, supporting local growers and landscape professionals, and generating economic activity tied to conservation and restoration efforts across the state.

**The Green Towson Alliance asks for a favorable report on HB217.**

Respectfully,

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*The Green Towson Alliance unites Towson area environmentalists to create a greener, healthier and more beautiful community through collaboration and activism.*

## References

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