



Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay
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*Deeply rooted in native plants,
promoting native landscapes
through education, advocacy and
collaborative action.*

HB 217, Commemorative Month - Maryland Native Plant Month

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Hearing Date: March 17, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

Located in Southern Maryland, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay¹, a 71-member chapter of the national organization Wild Ones², strives to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities across Southern Maryland. We **strongly urge you to support this bill** for the benefits it will bring to our local ecosystems, including the native plants and creatures (biodiversity) that call Maryland home. We must take every step we can to save our treasured Chesapeake Bay and its watershed for future generations.

Designating May as Maryland Native Plant Awareness Month in perpetuity complements the Maryland Native Plants Program (MNPP) created in 2023. The MNPP is providing significant and irreplaceable support to the State's \$2 billion horticultural industry.

Unlike one-time proclamations, a formal Maryland Native Plant Awareness Month in perpetuity would boost local businesses—nurseries, landscapers, farmers—and empower education and outreach efforts statewide. Legislation ensures lasting impact without spending public funds or adding mandates. By simply choosing to plant a native plant, nearly anyone can help our environment.

Native plants are a simple, sustainable solution to the urgent environmental challenges faced by Maryland, including habitat loss, invasive species, polluted runoff, and climate change:

- **Preserve Biodiversity:** Natives sustain our local ecosystems and can reverse the decline of imperiled species like the endangered Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly, our state insect.
- **Support Pollinators & Farms:** Native plants feed bees, butterflies, and insects essential to the production of crops grown for human consumption.
- **Protect Waterways:** Deep roots prevent erosion and polluting stormwater runoff, safeguarding streams, the Chesapeake Bay, and Maryland's famous native Blue Crabs and Rockfish.

Launched in 2022, a program to establish a Native Plant Awareness Month in every state and the District of Columbia was initiated by a national organization, The Garden Club of America (GCA). As of 2025, GCA reports that 44 states and DC observe a native plant month by proclamation, with 11 states converting to a permanent law. I encourage Maryland to join these states. By designating every May as Maryland Native Plant Awareness Month in perpetuity, your constituents, including nurseries, businesses, schools, nonprofits, government agencies, and others, can plan well in advance to promote education and sales for the growing interest in native plants from year to year.

I appreciate your support and leadership on the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee and respectfully urge you to **support HB 217 to designate May as Maryland Native Plant Awareness Month in perpetuity.**

Marlene Smith, President, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay



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References:

¹Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay Chapter, <https://chesapeakebay.wildones.org/>

²Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country, including 5 chapters in Maryland, <https://wildones.org/>