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## **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,

As a constituent of District 27A residing in Waldorf, I am writing to formally introduce myself and to respectfully urge you to **pass HB 217, Maryland Native Plant Month**, during the 2026 legislative session. As a life-long resident of Charles County and someone deeply invested in the future of Maryland and its residents, I believe this legislation is critical for protecting 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 your local constituents and future generations.

Having a designated Maryland Native Plant Month in May 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.

**High Impact, No Cost** - A formal Native Plant Month would boost local businesses—nurseries, landscapers, farmers—and empower education and outreach efforts statewide. Unlike one-time proclamations, 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.

Maryland faces urgent environmental challenges: habitat loss, invasive species, polluted runoff, and climate change. Native plants are a simple, sustainable solution:

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

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 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 Month in perpetuity.**

Respectfully yours,

*Marlene Smith*



Certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional | Certified Univ of MD Master Gardener/Bay-Wise 2.0  
Master Gardener | Xerces Ambassador | Founder and President Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay