



Friends of Sligo Creek Testimony

22 July 2025

RE: Bill 26-25, Vegetation – Invasive Plants, and Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-10

Position: Support with Amendments

President Stewart and members of Montgomery County Council:

Friends of Sligo Creek supports both the above bill and ZTA, but with amendments. We'll treat them separately. I am Kit Gage, Advocacy Director of Friends of Sligo Creek. Also I am a Master Watershed Steward, a Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional, native plant consultant to Sacred Grounds and a Gardener's Adviser. I've lived in Montgomery County for over 40 years.

Bill 26-25, Vegetation – Invasive Plants

Makes it Legal to Plant Native Plants: We generally support what we believe is the core intent of this bill – to make planting native plants including trees legal on private property. This is an important step, and we congratulate Member Glass for introducing it. For years, people who plant native plants have at times faced the opprobrium of people who are not familiar with them, who prefer lawn to plants that support pollinators and other critical parts of our environment. Sometimes people have been reported to the County for planting weeds when in fact they have planted native plants. This change should be very helpful and clarifying.

The definition of Native Plants should be linked to the [Maryland Native Plant Program](#) that includes the Maryland Plant Atlas. It is referred to by retailers of native plants and vetted by relevant state agencies and the Maryland Native Plant Society.

Non-Native Invasive Plants Not Acceptable to Plant: The second portion concerning weeds, needs some tweaking. First, weeds must be defined as non-native invasive plants, not just invasive species of bamboo. This is the opportunity to ban sale and planting of non-native and invasive plants, which includes invasive species of bamboo. As to the definition, what is a 'weed' is in the eye of the beholder. Non-native invasive plants is much clearer.

Further we believe it is acceptable to prohibit planting or growing of plants which are dangerous to human, just don't include them as weeds. This is the category where poison ivy fits, a native plant that supports birds and other natives in the environment. Poison Ivy and some other native plants (stinging nettle for example) should not be in places where humans, dogs and etc., can brush up against them from public spaces like streets and sidewalks, and then suffer from sores, pain and other nastiness. The

other plants identified as weeds in the current definition instead should be linked to the list produced and updated by the [Maryland Invasive Species Council](#). Don't specify any specific weed in this static bill. In this we join with Nature Forward and other organizations.

ZTA 25-10 – Zoning Text Amendment, Landscaping Requirements – Native Plants

50% Native Plants Species in Open Space Landscaping and in General Landscaping plant materials.

As in the above bill, requiring the use of native species and prohibition of invasive species are generally an excellent plan. And again, like Bill 26-25, we would like Native Species to be linked to the [Maryland Native Plant Program](#) and Atlas, and Non-Native Plants linked to the [Maryland Invasive Species Council](#). In this we join the coalition letter you received from several environmental groups including FOSC.

Address Lawn The area where we have some concerns is the use of 50% for native planting. Let me give a typical example: developers in creating new developments will clearcut and flat grade an area. In the process, they remove all existing forest canopy and even any individual trees and typically, topsoil. That complete, they build houses and then lay turf on top of what is now top-soil-removed clay. Mown turf supports no pollinators, and as it has very shallow roots, it holds little stormwater. Good for soccer and football but really little else.

And then developers plant maybe even 50% native plants. A couple Dogwoods, Redbuds, and sometimes the other odd understory native tree. In my job as Garden Adviser just last week I visited such a development in North Potomac. The turf is dying. Some of the trees are dying. Thankfully because the county has stormwater requirements, there are bioswales that are planted with native plants including trees and shrubs. But the new owners face a daunting task to switch this out to native plants. This ZTA doesn't attempt to address this larger problem, but let me focus on two pieces where it could:

Plant more native trees. There's no good reason for a developer to plant non-native trees. Requiring at least 70% and perhaps more is critical to pollinators and to the environment in general, and those trees are somewhat likelier to live in this environment.

Minimize Lawn. As noted above, developers tend to use turf as their predominant planting material. How does that fit into the 50%? It's not native. If you plant an acre of turf how does that count – as one plant? Or as tens of thousands? Then they plant one Dogwood and one Redbud and they think they're virtuous having planted 66% native plants. Lawn should be minimized. Native trees and shrubs, and of course perennial native plants should be maximized. This ZTA, to have any real meaning, should take a stab at addressing this issue.

Friends of Sligo Creek is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

July 21, 2025

Re: Bill 26-25, Vegetation - Invasive Plants and Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-10,
Landscaping Requirements - Native Plants

Position: Support with Amendments

Dear President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Members of the Montgomery County Council,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of Council Bill 26-25 and ZTA 25-10, aimed at addressing the use and sale of invasive plant species in Montgomery County. This is a vital step forward in protecting our native ecosystems, strengthening climate resilience, and safeguarding the long-term health of the County's environment.

Invasive plant species pose serious ecological and economic threats by outcompeting native vegetation, degrading wildlife habitats, increasing the risk of wildfires, and imposing costly management burdens on public and private landowners. We commend the Council for recognizing the need to curb the proliferation of these harmful species through stronger regulation and public education. The undersigned organizations also support the following amendments to strengthen the legislation:

1. **Clarify the weed definition:** For the Bill language, we recommend using the [Maryland Invasive Species Council's](#) list for what constitutes a weed versus invasive plant. From the inclusion of the eight types of weeds in the Bill as currently written, we are assuming the use of the Maryland Department of Agriculture's list of noxious weeds, which is not regularly updated. Prior to 2020, the last time that list was amended was in 1987. Council Bill 26-25 and ZTA 25-10 should include both [terrestrial](#) and [aquatic](#) invasives, which can be found on the Invasive Species Council's list.
2. **Update the language to use the most up to date State Native Plant Law:** The [Maryland Native Plant Program](#) was signed into law by Governor Moore, and includes the [Maryland Plant Atlas](#). We would recommend using this definition for what is native to our region, rather than the broader Mid-Atlantic region. Most importantly, it establishes the [Maryland's Best Native Plant Program](#), which offers resources to residents about options for native plants, trees, and shrubs; provides retailers of native plants; and is vetted by the Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Extension, Maryland Native Plant Society, and the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

We appreciate your leadership on this critical issue and urge you to support Council Bill 26-25 with these amendments and ZTA 25-10. We look forward to working with you to create a more ecologically sound and sustainable future for Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

Tree Friends United

Conservation Montgomery

Potomac Conservancy

Nature Forward

Friends of Sligo Creek

Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir (FOTMC)

Montgomery County Sierra Club

West Montgomery County Citizens Association