

Native Plant Protection Act

Zoning Amendment (ZTA) 25-10

Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Glass

Co-Sponsors: Council President Stewart and Councilmember Luedtke

It has been said by many, “the best time to plant a tree was 30 years ago. The second best time is now.”

Well 30 years ago we planted Asian barberry in front of our new housing. Twenty years ago we planted Asian Callery (Bradford) Pears along our roads. Eighty years ago we planted Asian multiflora rose to fill our hedgerows. Since then, the birds have been eating the berries and rose hips of these non-native species, spreading them through nearby woods, along meadow and stream edges. Even in others backyards. These seeds took hold, especially in disturbed areas along roadways and new construction, slowly replacing much of the native understory and creating a sometimes almost impenetrable hedge.

In the meantime, a new revolution in native gardening was emerging. The Native Plant movement is one where we consider not only the beauty, but the purpose and function of the plant. Does the plant feed birds and insects? Does it prevent erosion and run off? Does it provide shelter and nourishment for wildlife to reproduce? We recognized the incredible value of native plants to the insects and birds that evolved together to meet their mutual needs. Think of the monarch butterfly and milkweed, or the fireflies the fallen leaves under our trees. Butterflies might take the nectar from an Asian butterfly bush, but she won't lay her eggs there. We realized that when we switch out a native plant for a plant from another place, these system falter.

Planting native plants is not at the expense of beauty. Native planting can be as graceful and attractive as any other garden. And there are many native plant nurseries, gardeners and programs to assist in this process. I've included some resources below to give you an idea about these growing resources. There is a native plant facebook page with 16,000 followers. With this act, we are simply asking that developers choose native inkberry over barberry, spice bush over Bradford Pear, American holly over burning bush.

I am a Montgomery Parks Weed Warrior. I do most of my weeding at the Rachel Carson Conservation Park. The park has dense thickets of barberry, multiflora rose and Amur honey suckle. It has Oriental bittersweet and Chinese wisteria damaging its trees. It will take a lot more than our small crew to return the Park even partially to its naïve state. But it will help over the years if fewer of these invasive plants were being planted in the nearby homes.

So, thank you council members for supporting this wonderful Act. To quote the sponsor, councilmember Glass, “Native plants aren't just beautiful — they're essential to the health of our natural ecosystems.” What we plant now will likely be here 30 years from now. For the health of our environment, the time to plant native is now.

Valuable Resources

Maryland Plant Atlas <https://marylandplantatlas.org/index.php>

Commercial Maryland Native Plant List – Approximately 650 plants native to Maryland
<https://extension.umd.edu>

Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Native Plants of Maryland
<https://dnr.maryland.gov>

Maryland Invasive Plants Prevention and Control – List of Prohibited Invasive Plants and related resources https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/maryland_invasive_plants_prevention_and_control.aspx

Maryland Native Plant Society – multiple resources <https://mdflora.org>

Wild Ones “A Guide to Creating Beautiful Home Landscapes
<https://nativegardendesigns.wildones.org>

Homegrown National Park – Native Plant Resource Directory
<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/directory/>

Native alternatives

Invasive species

Juniper, River oats, Switch grass	Bamboo
Magnolia, American plum, Flowering dogwood, Riverbirch	Bradford Pear
Bottle brush buckeye, Sweet pepperbush, New York Ironweed	Butterfly bush
Blue flag iris, Marsh marigold	Yellow flag iris
Spice bush, native honey suckle	Asian honey suckle
American wisteria, Virginia creeper	Asian wisteria

Thank you for your time.

Jill Fonda Allen