

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



July 22, 2025 Testimony to Montgomery County Council
Supporting Bill 26-25 and ZTA 25-10
on supporting native species over invasives

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice-President Jawando, and Montgomery County Council Members,

Thank you very much. My name is Darian Unger, I am a longtime Silver Spring resident and professor at Howard University, but I speak today as Chair of the Montgomery County Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club and its members support both the spirit and the letter of this bill and the related ZTA, and thank its sponsors. I'll begin with both praise and hope: preserving native ecosystems is helpful both for our local environment and for larger climate change prevention efforts. Native ecosystems and plants provide needed sustenance for local insects which are, in turn, surprisingly necessary for the propagation of plants. The vast majority of North American plant species – almost 75% of them – require insects (frequently bees, but also others) to pollinate and reproduce. Everyone knows about the chicken and egg cycle – but there's also a plant and insect cycle that we can keep from unravelling here.

We do suggest some modifications to strengthen the legislation. First, certain percentages are unclear. For example if, as the ZTA says, "50% of required landscaping in new construction must use plant species native to the Mid-Atlantic region," let's strengthen that 50%. Because if somebody wanted to circumvent that rule, they could plant 50 large, non-native, bamboo-like plants, but somehow claim to offset them with 50 much, much smaller (but local and native) blades of grass. That's not a fair trade.

Second, as other advocates have pointed out, we would prefer a more appropriate and definitive language. Please use the Maryland Invasive Species Council's list for distinguishing weeds from invasive plants, and please use the Maryland Native Plant Program and Maryland Plant Atlas to better define what is native to our region here in Montgomery County, rather than the overly-broad "Mid Atlantic" region, which spans a much greater distance both north and south of us.

Finally and more broadly, I urge County Council to not double, but triple, or better yet quadruple your environmental efforts not just on native plants, but also on energy, public transportation, smarter growth, environmental justice, and electrification. County efforts are not even close to good enough. And if Montgomery County doesn't become a much stronger environmental leader and exemplar for the rest of the country, and if climate change continues unabated because of insufficient local legislation, then many of species that we think of as native will die out here and thrive in Maine and Canada, while Montgomery County will adopt the palmettos of South Carolina and the alligators and waterbugs of Florida. Personally, I like our bees, flowers, our fireflies, and our redbuds and oak trees ... and if we want them to stay native, then you have to enact stronger environmental legislation than what we have now.

Thank you very much.