

Submitter: Dii Mazuz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3173

My name is Dii Mazuz and I'd like to tell you why OregonFlora is important to me and my community. I've lived in Oregon for 15 years, during which time I have developed a very intimate relationship with the land and its natural inhabitants. Although I have worked in behavioral health for over a decade, most people who meet me outside of that setting eventually ask me if I work with plants for a living ("So are you a botanist/landscaper/land manager?") because my passion for and knowledge of our native flora here in western Oregon are often at the forefront of my conversations and activities. I lead a volunteer community group in creating and upkeeping native plantings at my neighborhood elementary school (I'm not a parent). I provide consultation on species selection and planting design for homeowners and community organizations in the city's Backyard Habitat program. I collaborate with local native plant experts, nurseries, and land owners to identify local species with both commercial potential and climate-resilient characteristics, collect necessary plant materials for propagation, and introduce these species to the retail market. Basically, wherever and whenever I can, I'm putting my specialized knowledge and skills towards helping my community deepen its connection to the land of our wondrous home state AND create landscapes that are better adapted to survive in a heating climate.

OregonFlora has been immeasurably important to all of my learning and collaborative work, so much so that the aforementioned contributions would have been impossible without it in the last 10 years. The website has been my single most relied-on reference resource for plant identification and research, both on the go in the field and back in the city. Nothing so comprehensive and user friendly exists to help Oregonians understand the plants that surround them. I know people who use it ranging from landscapers and horticulturalists to school teachers, home gardeners, and college students. Connecting a diverse range of people to our regional plantlife is a wonderful way of forging a sense of belonging and identity which promotes a mindset of stewardship and care for our shared home. As interest in native plants has dramatically grown in the last two decades, investing in the public educational resource that OregonFlora provides is not only culturally and economically invaluable, but politically prescient.

There is an ever growing number of Oregonian who want the knowledge that OregonFlora provides, as well a number of researchers and other experts. Knowledge of native plant species, their history, and changes in their behavior or distribution will be essential to building green infrastructure that will climate-equip our

state for the unprecedented challenges ahead.

Please support this bill to make funding for OregonFlora permanent!