

Submitter: Linda Hardison
On Behalf Of: HB3173 OregonFlora
Committee: Joint Ways & Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

I am writing to request the funding of HB3173 to establish the OregonFlora program, as part of HB5006.

The bill's modest request--\$400,000 in the biennium—will provide benefits far exceeding this amount to state agencies, businesses, farmers, and residents across the state.

For 31 years, OregonFlora has been gathering, curating, and sharing information about the vascular plants that grow in Oregon without cultivation: that's >4,800 unique species of grasses, ferns, trees, herbs, and shrubs. It maintains a database that researches and tracks the names, descriptions, and locations where all these plant species grow, both historically and in the present. Importantly, OregonFlora provides tools to identify plants and map their distribution, primarily through the freely accessible website oregonflora.org.

OregonFlora helps organizations achieve their missions and be more efficient by providing them with standardized, consolidated data that reflects the latest scientific research. As director, I have helped cultivate partnerships between state and federal agencies, native plant nurseries, Master Gardeners, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and educational/outdoor recreational groups. We are a trusted resource for these groups, which frequently do not have the time, financial backing, nor expertise to acquire this information on their own. Passage of HB3173 will help ensure the OregonFlora resources continue to be available and up-to-date to meet this statewide need.

Oregon's economy is based on its botanical resources. Healthy forests, productive rangelands, agricultural operations, outdoor recreation venues, and native plant horticultural endeavors all need reliable information about our state plants. OregonFlora is the only program that provides such Oregon-specific information that is curated and freely accessible.

The value OregonFlora provides to our state's human resources is also significant: our easy-to-use online resources increase the scientific literacy of Oregonians statewide. We support community science endeavors like wildflower shows, Native Plant Society activities, backyard habitat certification, and nature center education events that engage people of all ages and backgrounds. The ethnobotany chapter that will be published in the upcoming *Flora of Oregon Volume 3* book highlights the relationship between Indigenous

Peoples of this area and the plant communities they have nurtured and helped shape since time immemorial.

Having an up-to-date and an ever-growing knowledge base about Oregon's plant diversity will improve the quality of life and the economic well-being of our state in many different ways. HB3173 will leverage the decades of work OregonFlora has accomplished on a budget that has depended 100% upon donations and grants. Providing sustainable support will keep the resources of this statewide, equitable, science-based program available and improving for our state's future needs.

Thank you for considering the ways HB3173 will support Oregonians.