

Submitter: Megan Westby
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB547

I support making April Oregon's Native Plant Appreciation Month.

We have over 3400 species of native plants in Oregon including 120 species that only grow here. Native plants are important in Oregon for several key reasons:
Ecological Balance: Native plants play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of local ecosystems. They support the native wildlife, such as pollinators (bees, butterflies, etc.), birds, and other animals, by providing food, shelter, and nesting sites. These plants have evolved alongside local species, making them well-suited to the area's climate and soil.

Biodiversity: By preserving native plants, we help protect the diversity of Oregon's natural habitats. Native plants form the foundation of healthy ecosystems, contributing to the overall biodiversity of the state. When non-native species are introduced, they can outcompete native plants, leading to a loss of biodiversity.

Water Conservation: Many native plants are adapted to Oregon's climate, meaning they require less water, fertilizers, and pesticides than non-native species. This makes them more sustainable, particularly in areas where water conservation is important.

Soil Health and Erosion Control: Native plants are adapted to the local soil conditions and root systems, which help prevent soil erosion, improve soil health, and stabilize landscapes, especially in areas prone to landslides or flooding.

Cultural Significance: Native plants are often integral to Oregon's indigenous cultures, providing resources for food, medicine, and traditional crafts. Preserving these plants honors the heritage and practices of Native American communities in the region.

Resilience to Climate Change: Native plants are generally more resilient to the local climate and weather patterns. As climate change affects temperature, precipitation, and seasonal patterns, native plants are better equipped to adapt, unlike non-natives that may struggle to thrive under changing conditions. Our native plants, especially trees, also sequester carbon mitigating risks.

Aesthetic and Historical Value: Many of Oregon's native plants are visually striking, adding to the region's natural beauty. They also help maintain historical landscapes, giving a sense of place and identity to the state.

Economy: Native plants, especially the Douglas fir and Western hemlock, are the backbone of the timber and construction industries (among others).