

Chair Bowman, Vice-chair Drazan, Vice-chair Pham, and Committee members,

My name is Judi Sanders, and I am on the Board of Directors and serve as the Native Plant Appreciation Month Coordinator for the Native Plant Society of Oregon, a nonprofit dedicated to the enjoyment, conservation and study of Oregon's native plants and habitats. Our organization, which has over 60 years of history and 11 chapters across the state, strongly supports **SB 547A**, a **bipartisan** bill that would establish April as Oregon's **Native Plant Appreciation Month**.

This bill has no revenue or fiscal effects but it does affect something Oregonians hold near and dear, our wild areas. The [2023 Oregon Resident Outdoor Recreation Survey Report](#) found that “94.6% of Oregonians reported participating in at least one outdoor recreation activity on at least one occasion in Oregon during 2022.” While outdoor recreation involves many activities, a large part of what makes these activities enjoyable is the beauty of our outdoors, including our native plants. In the survey 37.4% of Oregonians engaged specifically in nature observation (e.g., birds, other wildlife, forests, wildflowers)” in their communities and 29% traveled outside their communities for nature observation. You can see that we have supportive testimony and organizational support from around the state.

Beyond generally providing value to the outdoors in Oregon, **native plants offer a wide array of benefits**—including aesthetic, economic, ecological, environmental, and cultural heritage—that contribute to Oregon’s rich biodiversity and quality of life.

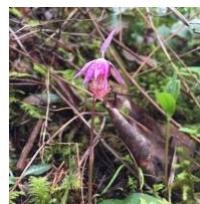
We live in a remarkable place where our native plants are integral to the beauty and ecological health of our environment. With over 3,400 native vascular plants—

from towering Sitka Spruce and the iconic Douglas Fir,



to the moderately sized Western Azalea and Oregon Grape

and to the tiny fairy slipper and twayblade orchids.



Oregon is home to a rich diversity of plants found across all 36 counties and in all legislative districts—even the most urban ones. In each of your districts there are dozens of native plant species. For example, in Representative Bowman’s you will find our iconic native Pacific dogwood tree, *Cornus nuttallii*.



In Representative Drazan’s district you can find the rare Clackamas iris, *Iris tenuis*¹, which is found only in Oregon.



In Representative Pham’s district you can encounter striped coralroot, *Corallorhiza striata*, one of our native orchids.



Representative Boshart Davis’ district has the endemic and very rare peacock larkspur, *Delphinium panvonaceum*.

Representative Elmer’s district has the rare Kincaid’s lupine, *Lupinus oreganus*.



¹ Photo by Tanya Harvey. All other photos by Judi Sanders.



Representative Kropf's district has the dramatic giant blazing star, *Mentzelia laevicaulis* var. *laevicaulis* (which was featured on our poster for Native Plant Appreciation Month this year).

In Representative Valderrama's district you can find *Asarum caudatum*, western wild ginger.



We are proud to have the **fifth-largest number of native plant species in the U.S.**² This includes 120 species endemic to and which grow only in Oregon³, such as the Umpqua kalmiopsis, *Kalmiopsis fragrans*,



and Howell's Mariposa Lily, *Calochortus howellii*.



Beyond aesthetics, **consider the economic impact of our native plants**: Oregon's timber industry, built upon exemplary native species like Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock (https://www.fs.usda.gov/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr997.pdf), leads the nation in softwood lumber and plywood production and the total number of engineered wood product manufacturing facilities. https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/OFRI_2023ForestFacts_WebFinal.pdf. Beyond timber, native plants support vital sectors like horticulture and construction. Further, we wouldn't have native truffles without our native trees.

On the ecological front, **native plants provide essential services** that sustain life—on land and in water. They offer shelter, food, and habitat for wildlife, help preserve biodiversity, and promote the resilience of ecosystems. Native plants often have vigorous root systems that reduce water runoff, prevent soil erosion, reduce flooding and support healthy watersheds. Crucially,

² Stein, B.A. and Gravuer, K. 2008. *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Role of Plants in State Wildlife Action Plans*. Arlington, Virginia: NatureServe. The states with more native plant taxa are larger than Oregon.

³ Linda Hardison, director of Oregon Flora, private communication about update of endemic species number, 2/1/25. Unless otherwise noted, all plant species numbers are from Oregon Flora.

they achieve this while requiring fewer pesticides, fertilizers, and less water than non-native species, making them a critical component of sustainable land management.

Environmental benefits are also significant. Native plants capture carbon and release oxygen, making them vital in addressing climate change—one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Oregon’s forests, predominantly composed of native trees, play a crucial role in carbon sequestration and mitigating environmental challenges as part of Oregon’s official climate change mitigation strategies.

Culturally, native plants are central to Oregon’s heritage. For thousands of years, Oregon’s Indigenous peoples relied on native plants for food, medicine, shelter, tools, and ceremonial purposes. This enduring connection is reflected in our state symbols—**Oregon Grape** as our state flower (designated in 1899) and **Douglas Fir** as our state tree (designated in 1939 and is featured on our license plates today).

While the benefits of native plants are clear, there are threats to our native plants. Not all wild plants in Oregon are native. We face challenges with **over 1,300 wild non-native plants**, including over **150 invasive species** that threaten our ecosystems. Some of these invasive species—such as noxious weeds—compete with native plants, degrade habitats, interfere with agriculture and can lead to soil erosion and wildfires (Oregon Department of Agriculture <https://tinyurl.com/2cfbbdt>). Beyond risks created by invasive species, our native plants face other threats such that the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center ranks 633 of Oregon's native vascular plant species as uncommon, threatened, vulnerable, imperiled or critically imperiled in Oregon (<https://tinyurl.com/2wunsdub>). They need our help and care.

This is where SB 547 comes in. By establishing **Native Plant Appreciation Month**, we can help increase public awareness and encourage the conservation and restoration of native plants throughout Oregon. This month-long celebration would:

1. Encourage schools, communities, and individuals to engage in activities that promote the appreciation, conservation, preservation and restoration of native plants.
2. Inspire the use of native plants in gardens and landscaping.
3. Promote local habitat restoration by planting native plants and removing invasive species.
4. Support programs like the **Backyard Habitat Certification Program**, which encourages homeowners to plant native species and create wildlife-friendly spaces.
5. Raise awareness through community science projects, such as documenting native plants on **iNaturalist**.
6. Support watershed councils and their restoration projects and other similar projects.
7. Support public and private projects to protect, conserve, and restore our imperiled native plant species.
8. Encourage people to explore and enjoy Oregon’s native plants in our wild lands.
9. Encourage learning about Oregon history and the first foods and stewardship practices of our Indigenous peoples.
10. Promote more native plants in the nursery and horticultural industries to make more plants available to the general public.
11. Encourage further research into native plants and their role in our ecosystems.

The Native Plant Society of Oregon (NPSO) has been celebrating Native Plant Appreciation since 2005, initially in a weeklong celebration and more recently, for the entire month of April. In 2023, the **Portland Garden Club** and the **Garden Club of America** reached out to us to help make this month permanent through legislation, NPSO agreed, and NPSO member Luci Moody asked her senator to sponsor the bill. We are proud to have the support of many organizations, and have **Senators Janeen Sollman** and **Sara Gelser Blouin**, as chief sponsors this bill as well as Senators **Broadman, Campos, Lieber, Meek, Reynolds, Weber**, and **Representatives McLain** and **Nathanson** as regular sponsors,

Some other states have also legislated a native plant month; legislation similar to SB 547 **passed unanimously in California in 2023**. By passing **SB 547**, you will be taking a significant step in promoting a healthier, more sustainable Oregon and in maintaining the beauty of our wild lands. I, along with the backing of many dedicated organizations, respectfully ask you to pass **SB 547** and make April **Oregon's Native Plant Appreciation Month**.

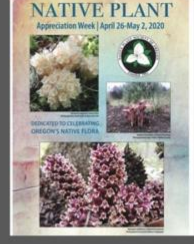
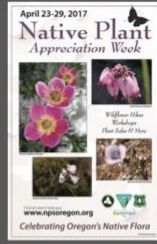
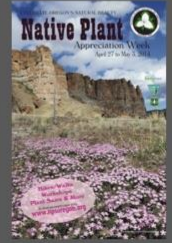
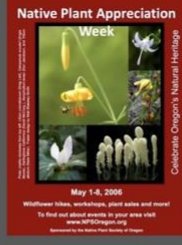
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Judi Sanders
Native Plant Appreciation Month Coordinator and Director at Large
Native Plant Society of Oregon

Additional Resources:

- [Oregon Forestry Facts](#)
- [USDA Forest Service – Native Plant Gardening](#)
- [BLM – Native Plant Communities](#)

Native Plant Appreciation Posters from the Native Plant Society of Oregon



Some organizations supporting SB 547A



Hardy Plant Society of Oregon

