

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Pham, and committee members.

My name is Steven Yeager and I am the President of the **Native Plant Society of Oregon** (NPSO). We are a more than 60-year-old organization with 11 local chapters across the state dedicated to the enjoyment, conservation, and study of Oregon's native plants and habitats. Our society has a long history of public education and celebration of our native plants. We strongly support the bipartisan bill, SB 547A, which would establish April as Oregon's **Native Plant Appreciation Month**.

There are several compelling reasons why Oregon should pass a bill to make April Native Plant Appreciation Month. Here's a breakdown of the key benefits:

1. **Environmental Awareness and Education:** A designated month would raise awareness about the importance of native plants in the state's ecosystems. Native plants are vital for local wildlife, such as bees, butterflies, birds, and other pollinators. Educating people about these plants could help foster a deeper understanding of how they contribute to the health of the environment.
2. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Oregon is home to a rich diversity of plant species, many of which are unique to the region. Celebrating native plants would promote their conservation, which is crucial to protecting the biodiversity of the state. By focusing on preserving native species, Oregon can help prevent the spread of invasive plants that often harm native ecosystems.
3. **Cultural and Historical Significance:** Native plants have deep cultural and historical importance to Indigenous communities in Oregon. Many plants were used for food, medicine, and ceremonial purposes. A designated month would honor this heritage and help preserve traditional knowledge about the sustainable use of plants.
4. **Sustainability and Climate Resilience:** Native plants are well-suited to Oregon's climate, requiring less water, fewer pesticides, and less maintenance than non-native species. By highlighting native plants, the state could promote sustainable gardening and landscaping practices, which contribute to reducing water usage and supporting climate resilience.
5. **Inspiring Action and Connection:** A Native Plant Appreciation Month would provide opportunities for people to engage with the outdoors, participate in community events like plantings or hikes, and form a stronger connection to nature. This could encourage individuals to plant more native species in their gardens or local parks, creating greener spaces and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship.
6. **Support for Local Economies:** Promoting native plants can stimulate local nurseries, landscape companies, and other businesses that specialize in native plant species. It can also create new opportunities for eco-tourism and educational programs, benefiting communities across Oregon.
7. **Health Benefits:** Native plants play a role in improving air and water quality, creating healthier environments. Research has shown that spending time in natural spaces can have positive effects on mental and physical health. Native Plant Appreciation Month

would offer a chance for Oregonians to reconnect with their natural surroundings and enjoy the mental and physical benefits that come from interacting with native plants.

By passing a bill to make April Native Plant Appreciation Month, Oregon would promote sustainability, environmental stewardship, cultural recognition, and community involvement, all while protecting and celebrating the state's natural heritage.

I and the Native Plant Society of Oregon strongly urge you to pass **SB 547A**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven Yeager". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The name "Steven" is on the left and "Yeager" is on the right, connected by a fluid stroke.

Steven Yeager
President, Native Plant Society of Oregon