

SB 547 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 5/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure designates the month of April of each year as Oregon Native Plant Appreciation Month. It declares an emergency and is effective on passage.

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

REVENUE: No revenue impact

Senate Vote: Ayes, 28; Excused, 2

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon has over 4,700 plant species that grow in the wild without cultivation, 72.5 percent of which are native to Oregon and more than 115 of which are endemic to, and only grow in, Oregon. Native plants are those that have established in the landscape independently from direct or indirect human intervention, including those that are new to science or that existed prior to European arrival, and that have adapted to, and evolved in, the local environment.

Oregon's native plants provide unique environmental, economic, and cultural value, including forming the foundation of the food chain and providing food to the native animals. They are essential to healthy, diverse, and sustainable ecosystems and help create and maintain clean air and water and stable soil. Oregon's native plants are well established in the ecosystems and have very little potential to become invasive pests in the wild and natural areas, thus requiring minimal fertilizer, soil amendment, water, and pesticide to maintain.

Oregon currently contends with over 1,300 wild non-native plants, including more than 150 invasive species (including noxious weeds) growing in wild and natural areas. Noxious weeds displace and compete with native and desirable economic plants, negatively affect agricultural and forest economies, impact natural resources such as fish and wildlife and overall watershed health, threaten cultural resources and first foods, and can contribute to extreme wildfire behavior.

The Oregon Biodiversity Information Center ranks 633 of Oregon's native vascular plants as uncommon, threatened, vulnerable, imperiled, or critically imperiled. Oregon's native plants attract beneficial insects like butterflies, ladybugs, and bumblebees, which help fight agricultural pests and pollinate food crops, thus boosting the economy. Many of Oregon's native plants improve soil health by increasing the diversity of soil microbes and helping the soil absorb and store water through their deep root systems.

Oregon's Native American tribes have lived and thrived by their knowledge of native plants, which have provided them with food, clothing, shelter, dyes, tools, medicine, and fuel for centuries. The Oregon grape has been Oregon's state flower since 1899, and it was used by indigenous tribes for medicine, food, and dyes. The Douglas fir has been Oregon's state tree since 1939, and it was used by tribes such as the Nuxalk and Quinault for torches, structures, fuel, tools, caulking, and medicine.