

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF OHIO NATIVE PLANT MONTH (APRIL)

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www.onapa.org

www.oipc.info

The Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association (ONAPA) is an all volunteer, statewide non-profit organization formed in 2012 to support the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. This organization is dedicated to promoting, protecting and improving Ohio natural areas & preserves for educational and scientific purposes. We endeavor to ensure Ohio's natural areas & preserves are adequately protected, receive appropriate management, and are appreciated and supported for the benefit of all Ohioans. ONAPA coordinates statewide stewardship projects in natural areas using member volunteers to control invasive plants. We currently have over 1,000 members and involve over 120 volunteers in our stewardship efforts.

The Ohio Invasive Plants Council (OIPC), formed in 2005, is also an all volunteer, statewide non-profit organization - a coalition of organizations and individuals throughout Ohio who have a mutual interest in Ohio's natural ecosystems and the effects of invasive plants on their biological diversity. The Council participates in statewide efforts to address the threats of invasive species by providing leadership and promoting stewardship, education, research, and information exchange. We have a long history of providing educational workshops, materials, and conferences, as well as research opportunities related to invasive plants. In our efforts to address the threats of non-native, invasive plants, we also promote the use of native plants in Ohio, working closely with the nursery industry, land managers, and gardeners throughout the state. While we do not have a membership at present, we regularly reach several thousand people each year through our website, listserve, workshops, printed materials, educational programs, and partner events.

Both organizations are in support of legislation to designate April as Ohio Native Plant Month. The proposed legislation states that "the month of April is designated as 'Ohio Native Plant Month' to increase public awareness of Ohio's native plants and the many benefits they provide to pollinators, Ohio's economy, and the health of Ohio's environment." Passage of this bill is an important step in the growing nationwide effort to restore native ecosystems and support declining pollinator populations. This statewide effort to designate a month each year to acknowledge the value of native plants is one everyone can support. Ohio's natural areas are best managed to promote native species diversity and control non-native, invasive plants which threaten native plant communities such as grasslands and prairies, wetlands, forests, and savannas. Both organizations mobilize partners and citizens throughout the state to become involved in protecting natural areas and improving awareness of the threats of invasive plants. Designation of a Native Plant Month in Ohio is an important step in advancing the values of native plant diversity, control of invasive plants, and the use of native alternatives in landscaping and habitat restoration. We plan to host specific programs and/or field trips in April to promote Ohio Native Plant Month.