

ASSEMBLY, No. 4492

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 24, 2018

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman ERIC HOUGHTALING

District 11 (Monmouth)

Assemblyman JOHN F. MCKEON

District 27 (Essex and Morris)

Assemblywoman JOANN DOWNEY

District 11 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Space

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Jersey Native Plants Program.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/11/2019)

1 AN ACT establishing the “Jersey Native Plants Program” and
2 supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. The Secretary of Agriculture in conjunction with the State
8 Board of Agriculture shall develop and implement a “Jersey Native
9 Plants Program” to encourage and promote the sale of New Jersey
10 native plants at retail garden centers and nurseries. The program shall
11 increase consumer awareness of the important role of native plants in
12 the ecosystem through advertising campaigns and marketing
13 programs, provide for the dissemination of information about the
14 variety and availability of New Jersey native plants, and create a
15 labeling program to identify native plants as “Jersey Natives” for sale
16 similar to the Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown programs.

17 b. The Department of Agriculture shall adopt, pursuant to the
18 “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.),
19 rules and regulations to implement this act.

20

21 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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24 STATEMENT

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26 This bill would establish the “Jersey Native Plants Program” in
27 the Department of Agriculture. The bill requires the department to
28 develop a program that would: (1) encourage and promote the sale of
29 New Jersey native plants at retail garden centers and nurseries; (2)
30 increase consumer awareness of the important role of native plants in
31 the ecosystem through advertising campaigns and marketing
32 programs; (3) provide for the dissemination of information about the
33 variety and availability of New Jersey native plants; and (4) create a
34 labeling program to identify native plants as “Jersey natives” similar
35 to the Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown programs.

36 Native plant species are a vital part of New Jersey’s heritage,
37 providing valuable aesthetic, economic, and ecological benefits to
38 State residents. New Jersey possesses approximately 2,100 native
39 plant species, a number that is comparable to states that are three to
40 four times larger. This diverse native flora includes hundreds of
41 different wildflowers, like violets and orchids, as well as many
42 different trees, shrubs, grasses, and ferns. Nineteen globally rare
43 plants have their largest or most viable populations in New Jersey,
44 and nine plants have been documented only in New Jersey and do
45 not occur anywhere else on Earth.

46 New Jersey’s floristic diversity is due in large part to its
47 geographical diversity, which includes the mountainous Highlands
48 in the north, the sandy Pine Barrens in the south, the rich Delaware

1 River Valley in the west, and the salt marshes of the Atlantic Coast.
2 Native fruits like the blueberry and the cranberry helped spur the
3 development of the agricultural industry in New Jersey, and earned
4 the State its official State slogan, the “Garden State.” New Jersey’s
5 preserved open space and farmland, which make up close to a third
6 of the State’s total acreage and contain most of the State’s native
7 plant species, provide an estimated \$20 billion per year in
8 ecosystem goods and services.

9 Native plants are vital to the State’s biodiversity, which provide
10 inhabitants with food, maintenance of water and air quality, waste
11 decomposition and soil generation, nutrient cycling, climate
12 stabilization, flood and erosion control, and medicines and
13 pharmaceuticals. Native plants also provide food and shelter for
14 native wildlife and insects, which in turn, perform essential
15 ecological and agricultural services such as seed dispersal,
16 predation, and pollination.

17 Studies have shown that New Jersey is rapidly losing its native
18 plants, with roughly one-third of those plants designated as
19 endangered or of special concern by the State’s Natural Heritage
20 Program. Threats to native plants include habitat destruction
21 caused by development and urbanization, pollution, and harmful
22 invasive plant species.