

RESOLUTION # 20
USE OF NATIVE PLANTS

1 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey’s nursery industry is a leader in the Northeast in production,
2 as New Jersey producers had \$505 million in sales in 2019, according to the USDA’s
3 National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), accounting for considerable growth
4 compared to the 2014 Horticulture Census total of \$356 million in sales; and

5 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey growers ranked seventh nationally in horticulture sales, and
6 New Jersey individual and family operations accounted for \$106 million of those sales; and

7 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey growers distribute plants far beyond the borders of New
8 Jersey; and

9 **WHEREAS**, native plants, their cultivars and varieties are a growing segment of
10 nursery products produced each year, and the demand for these plants continues to grow as
11 consumers develop awareness of their ecological benefits; and

12 **WHEREAS**, non-native, non-invasive plants also provide a variety of environmental,
13 health, aesthetic, and economic benefits to the homeowners, businesses and communities
14 where they are planted; and

15 **WHEREAS**, recent legislative and regulatory proposals have threatened to restrict
16 planting decisions of growers and plant choices for consumers, which could have the effect
17 of lessening the nursery industry’s competitiveness in the region; and

18 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in consultation with its
19 partners at Rutgers University, is best equipped, when compared to other state agencies, to
20 make determinations about the use and definitions of native and non-native plants, as a
21 result of its collective knowledge, experience and exposure to the nursery, greenhouse,
22 landscape, and horticulture industries in New Jersey; and

23 **WHEREAS**, non-native, non-invasive plant materials grown by New Jersey nurseries
24 are equally as desirable in planting for public projects as native plants, as both contribute to
25 the overall health of New Jersey’s nursery industry and the state’s environment; and

26 **WHEREAS**, in accordance with resolutions passed by the delegates at recent
27 Conventions, the Department of Agriculture’s Division of Marketing and Development has
28 developed a “Jersey Natives” promotional brand for native plants, along the lines of “Jersey
29 Fresh” and “Jersey Grown” branding, and work to delineate the plant materials covered by
30 this program is ongoing.

31 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 108th State
32 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9, 2023, do
33 hereby urge the Department to educate legislators and regulators as to the importance of
34 maintaining diversity and selection in the plants grown by New Jersey’s nurseries, including
35 but not limited to native plants, and to continue moving forward with development of the
36 “Jersey Natives” branding program.

37 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that native plants, and all their ecological and
38 economic benefits, shall be promoted to the greatest extent possible through existing
39 platforms such as the *Jersey Grown* branding program, but not to the exclusion of non-
40 native, non-invasive nursery crops.