

RESOLUTION # 36

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,
7 ranking fourth nationally in that category; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 **WHEREAS**, interest has been shared with the Secretary of Agriculture that
28 producers of native plants believe a specific designation within the “Jersey Grown”
29 promotional program, to be titled “Jersey Native Plants,” would greatly benefit their sector of
30 the industry.

31 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 106th State
32 Agricultural Convention, assembled through a virtual platform hosted in Trenton, New
33 Jersey, in accordance with COVID-19 pandemic recommendations, on February 17, 2021,
34 do hereby urge the Department to educate legislators and regulators as to the importance of
35 maintaining diversity and selection in the plants grown by New Jersey’s nurseries, including
36 but not limited to native plants.

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.

41 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue working to
42 create a “Jersey Native Plants” promotional brand, mirroring the efforts of “Jersey Fresh,”
43 “Jersey Grown,” and “Jersey Seafood” (among others) to build consumer awareness of and
44 interest in plant materials that are native to New Jersey.