**RESOLUTION # 11**

**USE OF NATIVE PLANTS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby urge the Department to educate legislators and regulators as to the importance of maintaining diversity and selection in the plants grown by New Jersey’s nurseries, including but not limited to native plants, and to continue moving forward with development of the “Jersey Natives” branding program.

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