



OHA-5

HB206/SB435

Relating to Hawaiian Plants

This bill phases in the increased use of Hawaiian (indigenous and Polynesian-introduced) plants in new and renovated publicly-funded landscaping projects.

HB206/SB435 amends the Procurement Code to require that a gradually-increasing minimum percentage of Hawaiian plants be used in new and renovated state and county funded landscaping projects. The law already requires the use of Hawaiian plants in public landscaping “wherever and whenever feasible,” however, without specific and instructive guidelines, the current law has failed to substantially increase the incorporation of Hawaiian plants in public landscaping projects.

In order to provide agencies with sufficient flexibility, HB206/SB435:

- exempts certain types of landscaping, e.g., turf grass and street trees, for which there are insufficient Hawaiian plant options, and
- provides a mechanism by which the counties can seek to exempt certain projects or types of projects from the minimum percentage requirements, e.g., for erosion control.

In addition to increasing Hawaiian plants in our public spaces and landscapes, HB206/SB435 will increase the supply of Hawaiian plants and nurseries and encourage the use of Hawaiian plants for homeowners and private entities.

WHY SHOULD WE SUPPORT HB206/SB435?

- The increased use of Hawaiian plants will support the native plant industry; educate residents and visitors about Hawai‘i’s unique culture, history, and environment; preserve our cultural heritage; and help to restore the ecological integrity of our islands.
- By promoting the use of plants specifically adapted to the geographic location in which they have evolved, this bill will help to restore balance to our island environment, while also reducing maintenance and other costs (such as decreased use of water, etc.) associated with landscaping.
- In a generation, Hawai‘i’s urban, built environment will better reflect the cultural and ecological heritage of our islands, promoting a true appreciation for our islands by visitors and residents alike.
- Increasing the use of Hawaiian plants will also support efforts to slow or stop the rate of extinction for endangered and threatened plants and wildlife that are found nowhere else in the world.

WHAT ARE HAWAIIAN PLANTS?

- This bill defines “Hawaiian plants” as both indigenous and Polynesian-introduced plants, e.g., kukui, kalo, wauke, niu, noni, and kamani.



WHY ARE HAWAIIAN PLANTS IMPORTANT?

- Hawaiian plants are important both culturally and ecologically, and the use of Hawaiian plants fosters a uniquely Hawaiian sense of place.
 - Cultural Importance: Hawaiian plants are the foundation of many Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, and are celebrated in Native Hawaiian place names, mo‘olelo, and cultural artforms such as hula. Unfortunately, Hawaiian plants have been significantly displaced by non-Hawaiian plants, and many are now threatened or endangered. If these unique natural resources are lost, the cultural practices, beliefs and understandings that rely on them may be lost as well.
 - Ecological Importance: Hawaiian plants have adapted to their local environments over hundreds if not thousands of years, creating unique ecosystems that are the ecological heritage of our islands. Hawaiian plants also provide essential habitat for native animals, insects, and birds, many of which are also found only in Hawai‘i, and also threatened with extinction.
 - Sense of Place: Hawaiian plants and their local significance are singularly unique to Hawai‘i, and help establish the sense of place that defines our island home. This bill supports our truly distinctive ecological and cultural heritage and understanding of place, by encouraging the use of plants sourced from the island and ahupua‘a on which the project is based.