



Louisville Audubon Society
P.O. Box 22162
Louisville, KY 40222

January 13, 2022

Dear Metro Councilman Arthur:

Thank you for sponsoring the newly revised Weed Ordinance (§ 156.052 D), which we Board Members of the Louisville Audubon Society strongly support. Compared with the old ordinance, the newly revised one contains clear definitions of terms and provides more specific guidance so that property owners, who want to garden using native plants, can more confidently replace lawn space with natural landscaping without worrying about being cited or fined.

Currently, our landscaping is dominated by lawns and *exotic* shrubs, groundcovers and flowering plants that the horticultural industry has sold for decades. However, as natural areas in our country continue to be replaced with agricultural land and suburban sprawl, more native plants and animals are being threatened with extinction via habitat loss and pollution. In response, scientists and conservation societies are urging people in cities and suburbs to grow more native plants on their property to support local wildlife species, particularly birds and pollinator insects. For instance, did you know that since 1970, the United States has lost 1.5 BILLION birds? Among the seven recommendations made by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for countering this loss is to “Reduce Lawn and Plant Native Species”.

Many people have become accustomed to a “normal” expectation of seeing water-hungry and often herbicide/insecticide- and/or fertilizer-assisted green lawns in their residential yards. However, over the last decades, scientific studies have shown upkeep and care of lawns are detrimental to air and water quality and therefore our health. In addition, pesticides applied to control insects in many lawn-dominated yards indiscriminately kill all insects entering the space, including pollinator bees and butterflies, and other insects at the base of the food web that are fed upon by birds. By killing the insect food base, birds suffer, particularly when feeding nestlings. The irony is that the very birds we are harming would otherwise help control many problematic insects around our dwellings.

Wouldn't it be better instead to make an offering to nature by planting native plants in our yards that, compared with exotic horticultural plants, are better adapted to our region, require fewer resources to grow, and provide better nutrition for pollinating insects and birds? Wouldn't it be better to encourage more environmentally safe and beneficial native wildflowers that are also aesthetically pleasing? This is a good opportunity to broaden our views and educate our community about the positive impact of native plants and pollinators. Local level policies can truly make a difference in our urban and suburban landscapes to create meaningful habitat for wildlife. Every yard matters - from the monarch butterfly that needs sustenance on the 2,000+ mile annual migration to and from central Mexico to the American Goldfinch feeding on the seeds of native

wildflowers in gardens. Every yard can make a difference in conserving our resources, providing healthier spaces to relax in, and sustaining other species.

Along with the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Foundation has called on cities across America to examine codes, ordinances, and restrictions to encourage native plantings and no-mow initiatives. Their goal is to encourage “planting with a purpose.” So far, numerous counties and cities across seven states have made robust mandates and landscape-wide changes to encourage native plant gardens-- the new conservation space!

This newly revised Weed Ordinance is a positive step forward in a process of landscape transformation that benefits both people and biodiversity in Louisville. We enthusiastically support its passage and offer our assistance as you work to gain support from Metro Council.

Sincerely,

The Board Members of the Louisville Audubon Society

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