

SUBJECT: Designating a state botanical garden and arboretum

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation & Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Frullo, Faircloth, D. Bonnen, Fallon, Gervin-Hawkins, Krause, Martinez

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Deece Eckstein, Travis County Commissioners Court; Chloe Lieberknecht, The Nature Conservancy)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Patrick Newman, University of Texas at Austin Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center)

DIGEST: CSHB 394 would designate the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin as the state botanical garden and arboretum.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 394 appropriately would designate the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center as the state botanical garden and arboretum because the center is state's the largest botanical garden and arboretum, with a unique mission to preserve the native plants, trees, and wildflowers of Texas.

The bill would honor the contributions of former first lady Lady Bird Johnson to the state of Texas and highlight her founding of the Wildflower Center, a non-profit organization whose association with the University of Texas at Austin has led to nationally recognized academic and applied research that has been a valuable resource for national parks and state agencies.

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CSHB 394 would promote other gardens in the state through the center's ongoing partnerships with state agencies and involvement in projects at locations throughout Texas, including with the George W. Bush Presidential Center and the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project in San Antonio. These partnerships and projects inspire the conservation of native plants for future generations and promote the state's floristic and ecological heritage.

The bill also would enhance the center's statewide conservation, education, and outreach endeavors. These include efforts to prevent the extinction of native wild plants through the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, which has preserved more than 6 million Texas seeds to date, and through conservation work that already has helped to preserve plant species throughout thousands of acres across the state.

OPPONENTS SAY:
No apparent opposition.

NOTES: CSHB 394 differs from the bill as filed by adding "at the University of Texas at Austin" to the formal name of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

A companion bill, SB 287 by Watson, was referred to the Senate Committee on Administration on January 30.