SITE-TO-SOURCE / SAMPLE CONSULTATION

# Privacy, woodland shade and pollinator planting in one yard

Durham, North Carolina

**$179 Home Landscape Plant Palette • Privacy, shade, sun and conditional wetness**

Illustrative report for a fictional client and site; no real property inspection or purchase. Sample edition: 7 Nov 2026 | PHY-SAMPLE-008_Durham_Layered_Yard

## Your recommended direction

Create layered privacy with appropriately sized native shrubs, protect the mature canopy, add a shade palette beneath trees, and begin with a small sunny pollinator area. Defer the wet pocket until drainage is known.

## The client behind the question

**Fictional client: Joyce Byers**

*"The back of the yard feels exposed, and I would love a bit more privacy without planting a giant hedge that needs trimming every month. There is clay that sticks to my shoes, an old shaded corner beneath the trees, and one sunny patch I could give back to pollinators. I'd like birds and butterflies and something nice to look at from the house. The family uses the paths every day, so please be careful about sharp plants and questionable berries."*

Illustrative mock submission, not an actual customer testimonial. Adapted from the fictional intake originally prepared for this example.

## Selected answers from the client intake

| Intake question | Client's answer |
|---|---|
| **Main goal** | More privacy, less lawn, bird and butterfly habitat, and attractive plantings on one 0.64-acre home property. |
| **Spaces described** | Exposed western edge, existing oak/pine shade, a sunnier lawn opening and one sometimes-wet low corner. |
| **Known conditions** | Sticky clay after rain, compacted areas, afternoon heat and uncertain drainage. |
| **Plant preferences** | North Carolina native shrubs and understory plants, spring flowers, layered screening and wildlife value. |
| **Avoid** | Thorns or dangerous fruits at family paths, aggressive vines, intense pruning and oversized evergreens. |
| **Resources** | Phased $1,200-$2,000 starter materials; hose watering for establishment, about two hours monthly thereafter. |

## How we answered the client's questions

| Client asked | How this report responds |
|---|---|
| **Can I get privacy without one solid evergreen wall?** | Use layered blackhaw, mapleleaf viburnum, spicebush and other size-appropriate shrubs; a large redcedar is conditional on real space and access. |
| **What will grow beneath the trees?** | Woodland phlox, alumroot, Cherokee sedge and compatible ferns offer a more suitable shade group than full-sun meadow plants. |
| **What fits the sunnier part?** | Orange coneflower, wild bergamot and little bluestem provide a coordinated flower-and-grass opening. |
| **Should we plant the puddling corner now?** | No fixed wet-landscape claim is made; sedge, rush and sensitive fern options stay conditional until drainage is observed. |

## What we clarified in the simulated written intake

| Follow-up question | Client reply and resulting decision |
|---|---|
| **Does the privacy screen have to be evergreen?** | Client: It would be nice, but low work and adequate space matter more.<br>Report decision: Prefer a layered deciduous buffer rather than a cramped evergreen hedge. |
| **How long does the low spot hold water?** | Client: Sometimes one or two days after hard rain; I have not timed it consistently.<br>Report decision: Leave the wet-area group as conditional, not an immediate purchase list. |

The plant recommendations and next steps that follow show the result of these client-specific choices. Site observations remain fictional, and conditions must be confirmed before real installation.

# How we interpreted this project

A simulated 0.64-acre Piedmont property with a woodland edge, sunnier turf and a partly wet low area. Family use, screening and reasonable maintenance guide the choices.

The $179 Home Landscape Plant Palette coordinates several related spaces on one residential property, with planting priorities and phases; a formal consultation call and revision are not included.

# Three decisions that matter most

**01** Measure shrub widths and keep screening plants out of circulation routes.

**02** Distinguish clay-textured soil from actual drainage behavior; test soil pH and fertility if planting fails.

**03** Start with manageable sunny and shady groups while preserving family-use lawn.

# Plant recommendations

28 screened plant choices are presented below. They are alternatives organized by planting environment and use—not a shopping list you must buy in full. Mature dimensions and growing conditions remain approximate; confirm the supplied plant form, actual site light and water before purchase.

## A / Privacy and layered structure

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Blackhaw**<br>*Viburnum prunifolium*<br>Core | The principal deciduous upper screen; flowers, fruit and fall color.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part shade; well-drained clay; 12-15 ft h; 6-15 ft w<br>**Check:** Reserve mature width; berries draw birds; expect winter visibility. |
| **Mapleleaf viburnum**<br>*Viburnum acerifolium*<br>Core | Lower understory layer beneath taller shrubs and trees.<br>**Best fit:** Dappled to part shade; well-drained soil; 4-6 ft h; 2-6 ft w<br>**Check:** Suckering colony possible; two genetically different plants improve fruit set. |
| **Spicebush**<br>*Lindera benzoin*<br>Core | Mid-height filtered screen; foliage and spicebush swallowtail habitat.<br>**Best fit:** Moist, well-drained partial shade; 6-12 ft h and w<br>**Check:** Deciduous; not a dry, full-sun hedge; male plant needed for female fruiting. |
| **Common witchhazel**<br>*Hamamelis virginiana*<br>Core | Late-season flowers; tall informal screen with layered branching.<br>**Best fit:** Part shade; moist, drained clay; 15-20 ft h; 10-15 ft w<br>**Check:** Avoid dry, compacted root zones; not evergreen screening. |
| **Downy serviceberry**<br>*Amelanchier arborea*<br>Core | Spring flowers and a light-canopy small tree at privacy-edge opening.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part shade; moist, well-drained clay; 15-25 ft h; 10-15 ft w<br>**Check:** Confirm open width; rust/fire blight possible; nursery A. canadensis labels may differ. |
| **Eastern redbud**<br>*Cercis canadensis*<br>Alternative | Spring-flowering structural substitute for serviceberry where canopy breadth works.<br>**Best fit:** Part shade to sun; clay if drained; 20-30 ft h; 25-35 ft w<br>**Check:** Much wider crown than most buyers expect; avoid wet/hot pavement edge. |
| **American fringetree**<br>*Chionanthus virginicus*<br>Alternative | Flowering small tree alternative for a visible garden opening.<br>**Best fit:** Part sun; drained clay; 12-20 ft h; 12-20 ft w<br>**Check:** Slow growing; not a rapid privacy hedge; allow full spread. |
| **Eastern redcedar**<br>*Juniperus virginiana*<br>Conditional | Only appropriate truly evergreen option in a sufficiently broad sunny rear margin.<br>**Best fit:** Full sun, drained clay; away from footpaths; 30-40 ft h; 10-20 ft w<br>**Check:** Not for shade or narrow fence strips; prickly juveniles; low-severity poison flag; check fire separation. |

## B / Shaded woodland edge

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Woodland phlox**<br>*Phlox divaricata*<br>Core | Early color along the shaded border, ahead of taller groundcovers.<br>**Best fit:** Moist, humus-rich shade; drained; 0.5-1 ft h; 1-1.5 ft w<br>**Check:** Needs first-season irrigation; powdery mildew and rabbit browsing possible. |
| **American alumroot**<br>*Heuchera americana*<br>Core | Leafy texture and low understory planting.<br>**Best fit:** Part to full shade; rich, drained soil; 1-2 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Do not bury crowns; keep out of saturated soil. |

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Cherokee sedge**<br>*Carex cherokeensis*<br>Core | Fine-textured clumps to knit the pathway margin without turf.<br>**Best fit:** Shade/part sun; average to moist clay; 1-2 ft h; 1-2.5 ft w<br>**Check:** Not a high-traffic lawn; supplement water in drought. |
| **Christmas fern**<br>*Polystichum acrostichoides*<br>Core | Winter-green structure beneath existing trees.<br>**Best fit:** Woodland shade; drained slope; 1-2 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Protect from stomping and drying; avoid waterlogged clay pockets. |
| **Green-and-gold**<br>*Chrysogonum virginianum*<br>Core | Low spring-flowering ground layer away from active foot traffic.<br>**Best fit:** Moist shade; organic soil; 0.2-0.6 ft h; spreading<br>**Check:** May spread by rhizomes; confirm drainage and mulch lightly. |
| **Bottlebrush grass**<br>*Elymus hystrix*<br>Alternative | Texture, seed structure and niche wildlife cover in open woodland shade.<br>**Best fit:** Dappled shade; drained, neutral-leaning soil; 2.5-3 ft h; 1-1.5 ft w<br>**Check:** Check pH; keep seed heads behind path edge. |
| **Bluestem goldenrod**<br>*Solidago caesia*<br>Core | Late-season pollinator flowering in shade-to-edge locations.<br>**Best fit:** Open woodland shade; well-drained; 1-4 ft h; 1.5-3 ft w<br>**Check:** Allow room for arching stems; may self-seed. |
| **Marginal woodfern**<br>*Dryopteris marginalis*<br>Alternative | Evergreen fern substitute where Christmas fern is scarce.<br>**Best fit:** Humus-rich, drained shade; 1.5-2.5 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Requires consistent first-season moisture; avoid waterlogged depressions. |
| **White wood aster**<br>*Eurybia divaricata*<br>Conditional | Late white flowering in open woodland patch.<br>**Best fit:** Dry-to-medium shaded clay; 1-3 ft h; 1.5-2.5 ft w<br>**Check:** Rhizomatous spread; plant behind an edge, not an immaculate formal strip. |

## C / Sunny pollinator opening

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Orange coneflower**<br>*Rudbeckia fulgida*<br>Core | Long midsummer-to-fall color, seed for birds.<br>**Best fit:** Sun; well-drained clay; 2-3 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Cultivars common in trade; confirm straight species if preferred. |
| **Wild bergamot**<br>*Monarda fistulosa*<br>Core | Bee and butterfly forage with aromatic foliage.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part sun; average drained; 2-4 ft h; 2-3 ft w<br>**Check:** Airflow helps reduce powdery mildew; do not plant in a play corridor. |
| **Narrowleaf mountain mint**<br>*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*<br>Core | Long-lived pollinator resource and fine-textured flowers.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to light shade; drained soil; 2-3 ft h; 1.5-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Can spread; locate within a border that can be edited yearly. |

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Little bluestem**<br>*Schizachyrium scoparium*<br>Core | Warm-season tuft for fall color and winter habitat.<br>**Best fit:** Sun; average to dry well-drained clay; 2-4 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** No good fit in chronically wet clay; leave space for winter stems. |
| **Eared coreopsis**<br>*Coreopsis auriculata*<br>Core | Spring-to-summer low flowering mass at meadow front.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part sun; average, drained; 0.5-1.5 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Spreads by stolons; edge periodically; needs some moisture. |
| **Gray goldenrod**<br>*Solidago nemoralis*<br>Core | Late golden flowers in the drier, elevated portion of lawn conversion.<br>**Best fit:** Sun; dry, well-drained; 1-2.5 ft h; 1-2 ft w<br>**Check:** Not the swale species; expect seedling recruitment. |
| **Calico aster**<br>*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*<br>Core | Autumn nectar resource and transition to woodland edge.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part shade; average-to-moist; 2-4 ft h; 2-3 ft w<br>**Check:** Can be rangy in shade; place in mid-back band. |
| **Switchgrass**<br>*Panicum virgatum*<br>Conditional | Tall vertical structure at far side of sunny border.<br>**Best fit:** Full sun; moist, drained clay; 3-7 ft h incl. plumes; 2-3 ft w<br>**Check:** Keep well away from buildings and walkways; fire-risk flag; avoid shade flop. |

## D / Low spot - conditional only

| Plant / selection status | How it may work and what to check |
|---|---|
| **Sallow sedge**<br>*Carex lurida*<br>Conditional | Wet-pocket sedge only after drainage observations justify planting.<br>**Best fit:** Moist to wet clay; sun to part shade; 2-3 ft h; 2-3 ft w<br>**Check:** Do not use as proof of wetland status; not for a permanently dry bed. |
| **Soft rush**<br>*Juncus effusus*<br>Conditional | Small wet-margin accent if the low spot stays moist for prolonged periods.<br>**Best fit:** Sun to part shade; wet soil; 2-4 ft h; 1-3 ft w<br>**Check:** NC material often labeled J. effusus subsp. solutus; verify trade identity. |
| **Sensitive fern**<br>*Onoclea sensibilis*<br>Conditional | If shaded portion of low area stays moist, a naturalized fern layer.<br>**Best fit:** Shaded, consistently moist clay; 2-4 ft h; spreading<br>**Check:** Spreads readily and dislikes drought; not for narrow formal strips. |

# How to put the recommendations to work

**01** Check light, roots, drainage and existing invasive plants.

**02** Plant a small privacy group and shaded-edge cluster, allowing future growth.

**03** Add a modest sunny flower pocket and reassess low-ground moisture later.

# Important site and safety considerations

- Native evergreens are not necessarily appropriate for every small privacy edge.
- Avoid plants with meaningful ingestion or irritant concerns in easily accessed family areas.

## A few things we would hold back

**Ligustrum sinense (Chinese privet):** Invasive in NC; not an acceptable privacy-screen purchase. Confirm identity of existing hedge before removal.

**Calycanthus floridus (Carolina allspice):** Suitable ecologically but seeds contain toxic alkaloids; defer for this high-access family-use concept.

**Packera aurea (golden ragwort):** NC State notes pyrrolizidine alkaloids, possible liver effects and contact irritation; also a spreading plant.

# Plant sourcing and expectations

Ask growers for the exact scientific name (including any trade synonym), the plant or seed format, the propagation source and whether stock is suitable for the local climate. A nursery listing is a lead for shopping, not proof of current inventory, correct provenance, or guaranteed establishment.

## Examples of places to inquire

**Deep Roots Natives.** Online native-plant supplier and may-source service; zero species counted as in stock

**Crooked Creek Nursery.** Native species grower; specific species and quantity not confirmed

**Other NC Native Plant Society directory growers.** Directory lead; contact individual grower for true species and ecotype

# Sources consulted

The references below support the regional botanical, gardening, or regulatory decisions in this illustration. Published range, nursery listings and generalized soils information do not prove parcel-scale conditions, county indigeneity or seed-lot origin. Check dated rules and availability before making real purchases.


Viburnum prunifolium species profile

Viburnum acerifolium species profile

Lindera benzoin species profile

Hamamelis virginiana species profile

Amelanchier arborea species profile

Cercis canadensis species profile

Chionanthus virginicus species profile

Juniperus virginiana species profile

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Heuchera americana species profile