SITE-TO-SOURCE / SAMPLE CONSULTATION

A better planting for one difficult backyard bed

Onondaga Hill, New York

$89 Single-Area Plant Palette • A single planting area

Illustrative report for a fictional client and site; no real property inspection or purchase. Sample edition: 7 Nov 2026 | PHY-SAMPLE-001-89_Onondaga_Hill_Single_Area

Your recommended direction

Build the planting from the drier rim inward. Start with golden alexanders, bee-balm, asters, and sedges on the moisture transition; reserve turtlehead, monkeyflower and wetland sedges for confirmed consistently moist places.

The client behind the question

Fictional client: Dorothy Gale

"I'm ready to make that muddy patch look like a real garden instead of a patchwork of whatever I find at the nursery. It's roughly fifteen by twenty feet, and the shade moves across it in the afternoon. Spring water can sit there for days, but I've seen it dry out by summer. Could you put together a set of plants that look good together, tell me which part of the bed each belongs in, and help me avoid anything that would invite trouble with Toto?"

Illustrative mock submission, not an actual customer testimonial. Its wording is reconstructed from the original scenario.

Selected answers from the client intake

Intake question	Client's answer
Main goal	One coordinated native-plant bed that looks intentional across the growing season.
Area described	One approximately 15 x 20 ft spring-wet backyard depression; a drier rim, middle transition and lowest pocket.
Conditions I am unsure about	How far the wet soil extends, how long the lowest portion stays damp and afternoon shade.
Plant preferences	Flowers through more than one season, soft grassy texture and modest upkeep.
Things to avoid	Dog-access hazards, overcrowding and committing money to plants that need year-round wet soil.
Implementation preference	Start with a small compatible grouping, then add plants after seeing which microhabitats hold moisture.

How we answered the client's questions

Client asked	How this report responds
Can one list work across the whole low spot?	No. The report separates a drier outer rim, a transition and a potentially wet center instead of treating the 300-square-foot bed as uniform.
What should make up the first grouping?	Golden alexanders and scarlet bee-balm can add flowering interest where moisture fits, with shade-positioned sedges/asters as appropriate.
Which plants belong only in the wet center?	White turtlehead, monkeyflower and wet-site sedges remain conditional until midsummer moisture has been observed.
How do I avoid buying too much?	The 11-taxon palette is a menu with substitutions, not an instruction to purchase all eleven at once.

What we clarified in the simulated written intake

Follow-up question	Client reply and resulting decision
Does the soil stay wet after spring?	Client: I have not watched it consistently in July or August. Report decision: Begin at the adaptable margin and delay wet specialists until a summer check.

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 roughly 15 × 20 ft low area with spring mud, variable summer moisture and afternoon shade. The goal is an attractive, manageable native-style planting with dog exposure considered.

The $89 Single-Area Plant Palette coordinates plants for one defined bed, with fit notes and substitutions. A consultation call, formal revision and whole-property design are not included.

Three decisions that matter most

01 Mark three micro-areas: the outer rim, the moisture transition and the lowest pocket.

02 Begin with a repeated starter combination rather than every species in the palette.

03 Keep tall or spreading species away from paths and check plant exposure around the dog.

Plant recommendations

11 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.

One wet-to-dry bed

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Plantain-leaved sedge *Carex plantaginea* Core option	Broad, pleated leaves suit the better-moistened shaded margin. **Best fit:** Shade; moist-mesic; 0.5–1.5 ft · foliage
Blue-stemmed goldenrod *Solidago caesia* Core option	Delicate golden flowers along stems in a lightly shaded edge. **Best fit:** Part shade; dry-mesic; 1.5–3 ft · fall
Blue wood aster *Symphyotrichum cordifolium* Core option	Late flowers in partial shade; leave room for self-seeding. **Best fit:** Part shade; dry-mesic; 2–4 ft · fall
White turtlehead *Chelone glabra* Conditional option	Reserve for soil that remains moist well into summer; nursery-propagated only. **Best fit:** Part sun; moist-wet; 2–4 ft · late summer Check: New York lists this species as exploitably vulnerable under 6 NYCRR 193.3. Use documented, lawfully propagated stock; do not collect it from the wild for this project.
Golden alexanders *Zizia aurea* Core option	Bridges spring bloom and moist-to-average conditions. **Best fit:** Sun–part shade; mesic; 1.5–3 ft · late spring
Allegheny monkeyflower *Mimulus ringens* Conditional option	Conditional: establish only after repeated wetness is confirmed. **Best fit:** Sun–part shade; wet; 1–3 ft · summer
Sallow sedge *Carex lurida* Conditional option	Wet-ground sedge; not a substitute for a dry lawn edge. **Best fit:** Sun–part shade; wet; 1.5–3 ft · foliage
Bladder sedge *Carex intumescens* Conditional option	Useful where moisture persists beside tree cover; seedheads add texture. **Best fit:** Part shade; moist-wet; 1–2 ft · foliage
New england aster *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* Core option	Tall late-flowering accent, best toward the back of an open planting. **Best fit:** Sun; mesic-moist; 3–5 ft · fall
Blue vervain *Verbena hastata* Conditional option	Upright flowers; site on the reliably moist side, not a drought-prone bank. **Best fit:** Sun–part sun; moist; 2–5 ft · summer

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Scarlet bee-balm *Monarda didyma* Core option	For the moist margin, not standing water; airflow helps limit mildew. **Best fit:** Part sun; mesic-moist; 2–4 ft · summer **Check:** For the moist margin, not standing water; airflow helps limit mildew. NY protected-plant sourcing: do not wild-collect; obtain lawful nursery-propagated material. New York lists this species as exploitably vulnerable under 6 NYCRR 193.3. Use documented, lawfully propagated stock; do not collect it from the wild for this project.

How to put the recommendations to work

01 Track summer moisture and daily sunlight.

02 Buy a few nursery-propagated plants for the transitional edge.

03 Expand into the wettest zone only after the site proves capable of supporting wetland plants.

Important site and safety considerations

- The mapped upland soil unit does not prove drainage in this particular bed.
- Scarlet bee-balm and white turtlehead appear on New York protected-plant lists; verify lawful nursery propagation and do not collect from the wild.

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

Local native-plant organizations and regional nursery directories. Use for lawful, nursery-propagated stock; verify species and origin before purchase.

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.

USDA: Palatine soil series

Kew: Taxonomic reference

Mill Street: Native plants

Mill Street: Plant inventory

FLNPS: Native plant list

FLNPS: Golden alexanders

FLNPS: Scarlet bee-balm

FLNPS: White turtlehead

New York: Protected plants