SITE-TO-SOURCE / SAMPLE CONSULTATION

Native landscaping for a neighborhood commercial property

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

$2,950 Illustrative Professional Scope • **Three private-property work areas**

Illustrative report for a fictional client and site; no real property inspection or purchase. Sample edition: 7 Nov 2026 | PHY-SAMPLE-006_Philadelphia_Gym

Your recommended direction

Begin on verified private planting areas with durable grasses, flowering perennials and a modest shrub buffer. Treat street trees and public sidewalks as a separate City permissions process; test soil where exposure or disturbance warrants it.

The client behind the question

Fictional client: Rocky Balboa, fictional gym operator

“People come to the gym to train, not to walk through weeds and rubble. I want the outside to look welcoming and give a bit back to the neighborhood - flowers, maybe some habitat for bees - but nobody should trip at the entrance or lose access to the loading door. I've got a little courtyard, a front strip and some space out back. The staff can water at first, but we can't maintain a complicated landscape every day. I also don't know whether that front strip is ours or the City's.”

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
Business goal	Welcoming, low-maintenance native planting that suits a busy neighborhood gym.
Potential planting sites	Front setback, fenced shaded courtyard and sunny service-yard buffer on a hypothetical developed 0.18-acre lot.
Operational constraints	Doors and accessible circulation, emergency access, deliveries, security sightlines and limited staff time.
Site concerns	Compacted or possibly filled soil, road salt, reflected heat and uncertainty over the front property line.
Plant preferences	Locally appropriate plants, flowers in more than one season, pollinators away from the immediate doorway.
Timeline and implementation	Plan in winter; consider a small private-property pilot in spring 2027 if checks allow. Implementation quoted separately.

How we answered the client's questions

Client asked	How this report responds
Can we just plant a row along the public sidewalk?	Not on an assumed basis. Verify private ownership and separate City right-of-way approvals before any sidewalk or street-tree work.
What if the soil contains old fill?	Treat this as an investigation trigger, not a contamination finding. Obtain relevant testing and professional advice before disturbance.
What will fit at the entrance?	Little bluestem, purple lovegrass and low pussytoes are examples for a verified private sunny bed with clear circulation.
Can the crew maintain it without a gardener every day?	The report proposes a small pilot with ordinary staff checks and a separate establishment routine, not a large one-time installation.

What we clarified in the simulated consultation

Follow-up question	Client reply and resulting decision
Does the gym own the front strip?	Client: I think so, but I have not checked the deed or survey. Report decision: No planting authorization or sidewalk design is assumed; property-boundary check comes first.
Who uses the rear access?	Client: We have regular deliveries and lots of people arriving near the front. Report decision: Keep all door, loading and pedestrian routes unplanted and clear.

How the project developed through feedback

Point in the example	What changed in the recommendations
First request	Make all three problem areas attractive with native plants.
Professional scoping questions	Boundary, old fill, utility lines, access routes and available staff care were still unverified.
Resulting custom strategy	Prioritize a small private-property courtyard/frontage pilot; leave public right-of-way, street trees, drainage engineering and remediation to separate approval or specialist scopes.

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 hypothetical South Philadelphia business wants to improve private entrance beds, an interior courtyard and a rear service area. Sidewalk space, road salt, utilities and possible soil contamination affect feasibility.

This custom professional example adds a defined project scope, staged decisions, sourcing considerations and specialist referral points. Its illustrative fee is not a fixed published price or an installation budget.

Three decisions that matter most

01 Confirm the property line, accessible passage, utility locations and historic fill or lead exposure risk.

02 Install a small private-property pilot before committing to extensive streetscape changes.

03 Plan separately for municipal authorization if a sidewalk tree or public right-of-way planting is desired.

How to read a professional strategy

The plants and phases below are an evidence-based starting framework. Areas, hazards, permissions and management arrangements must be established with the appropriate local professionals before installing at scale. This illustrative professional fee covers consulting, not construction or implementation.

Project roadmap and decision gates

Stage	What we evaluate	Decision or deliverable
Ownership and access	Confirm which beds lie on private land, door/path clearances and building access before drawing a plant boundary.	Private planting scope and unresolved right-of-way items.
Exposure and infrastructure	Review historic fill/lead concerns, utility corridors, road salt and rooting volume. Arrange relevant specialist testing where needed.	Site risk register and actionable assessment questions.
Small private-property pilot	Start in an entrance or courtyard area with easy maintenance and visibility, avoiding trees in narrow constrained strips.	Short list of installation-ready choices after local checks.
Municipal options	If street trees or sidewalks remain a goal, refer work to the correct City approval process before purchasing or excavating.	Separated approval path without implied authorization.

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 | Private entrance setback

These are conditional site-unit options, not an instruction to purchase or sow every species.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Little bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium* Core	Vertical seasonal texture without a hedge. **Best fit:** Full sun; lean well-drained soil; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Can flop in fertile/shady spots; keep away from door swings.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Purple lovegrass *Eragrostis spectabilis* Core	Low, airy late-season grass for the dry private frontage. **Best fit:** Full sun; dry soil; height 1-2 ft **Check:** Loose seed heads may self-sow; edge and check winter exposure.
Orange coneflower *Rudbeckia fulgida* Core	Long yellow display where a seasonal watering point exists. **Best fit:** Sun; average moisture; height 1-3 ft **Check:** Confirm locally appropriate taxon: Good Host lists R. fulgida var. deamii, not every R. fulgida label.
Slender mountain mint *Pycnanthemum tenuifolium* Core	Pollinator nectar and fine-textured foliage. **Best fit:** Full sun-part sun; average to dry; height 1.5-3 ft **Check:** Place away from the doorway to reduce close bee encounters.
Gray goldenrod *Solidago nemoralis* Core	Late-season flowers without a tall screen. **Best fit:** Full sun; dry; height 1-2 ft **Check:** Monitor natural reseeding, do not assume specific salt tolerance.
Foxglove beardtongue *Penstemon digitalis* Conditional	Early-season flowers and vertical structure. **Best fit:** Sun-part shade; average; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Check soil moisture and locally appropriate origin before ordering.
Pussytoes *Antennaria plantaginifolia* Core	Very low border/groundcover along private edges. **Best fit:** Sun-part shade; dry and draining; height 3-8 in **Check:** Avoid high foot traffic; confirm no persistent waterlogging.
Threadleaf coreopsis *Coreopsis verticillata* Conditional	Fine foliage and long bloom in a sheltered hot bed. **Best fit:** Full sun; dry-average; height 1-2.5 ft **Check:** Published hellstrip lists mix native and nonnative plants: verify PA indigenous status and exact cultivar before advertising as locally native.

B | Part-shade interior courtyard

These are conditional site-unit options, not an instruction to purchase or sow every species.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Pennsylvania sedge *Carex pensylvanica* Core	Fine, lawn-like foliage in selected shaded pockets. **Best fit:** Part shade; dry-mesic; height 0.5-1 ft **Check:** Not a wear-resistant turf replacement; test under heavy tree roots.
White-tinged sedge *Carex albicans* Core	Alternative sedge with documented Mid-Atlantic trial performance. **Best fit:** Part sun-shade; well-drained; height 0.5-1.5 ft **Check:** Avoid saturated compacted clay.
White wood aster *Eurybia divaricata* Core	Reliable late-season flowers in woodland-style beds. **Best fit:** Part shade; average-dry; height 1.5-3 ft **Check:** Can spread; keep maintained along walking edges.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Blue-stemmed goldenrod *Solidago caesia* Core	Autumn color within dry shade. **Best fit:** Part shade; dry-average; height 1-3 ft **Check:** Requires adequate width to retain a tidy pathway edge.
Wild geranium *Geranium maculatum* Core	Spring flowers and mid-height foliage layer. **Best fit:** Part shade; average/moist; height 1-2 ft **Check:** Can die back later in summer; interplant with sedges.
Woodland phlox *Phlox divaricata* Conditional	Spring flowering where supplemental water is available. **Best fit:** Part shade; humus/mesic; height 1-1.5 ft **Check:** Mt. Cuba trial notes vigor varies with nursery quality; not for hot dry pavement edge.
American alumroot *Heuchera americana* Core	Foliage interest with a restrained mound shape. **Best fit:** Part shade-shade; height 0.5-1 ft foliage **Check:** Mt. Cuba found leaf scorch under sunnier exposure; avoid full sun.
Eastern red columbine *Aquilegia canadensis* Conditional	Light spring flowers and seasonal architectural detail. **Best fit:** Bright shade/part sun; draining; height 1-3 ft **Check:** Not a safety guarantee: keep all potentially ingestible plant parts away from unsupervised children.
Christmas fern *Polystichum acrostichoides* Conditional	Evergreen foliage to retain winter appearance. **Best fit:** Shade-part shade; well drained; height 1-2 ft **Check:** Needs irrigation through establishment and moisture in exposed heat.
Golden ragwort *Packera aurea* Conditional	Spring groundcover for moisture-retentive corners. **Best fit:** Part shade; moist; height 0.5-2 ft with flowers **Check:** Spreads by runners; not for the driest courtyard corners or narrow edges.

C | Rear sunny service-yard buffer

These are conditional site-unit options, not an instruction to purchase or sow every species.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Common ninebark *Physocarpus opulifolius* Conditional	Tough large shrub in screened rear buffer. **Best fit:** Sun-part sun; average; height 5-10 ft **Check:** Width and sight lines must be confirmed; not for frontage.
New jersey tea *Ceanothus americanus* Core	Flowering low shrub where soil is not saturated. **Best fit:** Full sun; well drained; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Slow establishment; do not place where snow piles/drainage accumulate.
Shrubby st. johns-wort *Hypericum prolificum* Core	Long summer bloom and modest shrub structure. **Best fit:** Sun-part shade; average-dry; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Record any staff/pet browsing; no non-toxicity assertion.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Fragrant sumac *Rhus aromatica* Conditional	Broad low cover over residual rear bare soil. **Best fit:** Sun; dry-average; height 3-6 ft (species) **Check:** Species can spread and be large; no tight walkway use; named compact cultivars are separate choice.
Switchgrass *Panicum virgatum* Conditional	Tall winter structure in rear only. **Best fit:** Sun; average-moist; height 3-6 ft **Check:** Avoid blocking security sight lines and fire equipment access.
Wild bergamot *Monarda fistulosa* Core	Summer nectar and aromatic blooms. **Best fit:** Sun-part sun; average-dry; height 2-4 ft **Check:** May develop powdery mildew and self-sow.
Golden alexanders *Zizia aurea* Core	Early nectar/host value and mixed border continuity. **Best fit:** Sun-part shade; average-moist; height 1-3 ft **Check:** Do not label as drought-proof; protect from summer drying.
New england aster *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* Conditional	Late flowers in a larger rear bed. **Best fit:** Sun; average-moist; height 3-5 ft **Check:** Tall and may need support; position far from public route.
Butterfly milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa* Conditional	Targeted monarch host in a low-contact rear pocket. **Best fit:** Sun; dry well drained; height 1-2.5 ft **Check:** Milky sap and plant ingestion can present exposure concerns; keep out of child-access corridor and review risk.
Sundrops *Oenothera fruticosa* Core	Spring to early-summer color as meadow edge filler. **Best fit:** Sun; dry-average; height 1-2 ft **Check:** Can spread; confirm trade form and local origin.

How to put the recommendations to work

01 Gather deeds/survey information, photographs and a utility markout; assess soil-testing needs.

02 Plant and evaluate a small private-land entrance/courtyard grouping.

03 Expand to the rear buffer only after maintenance access and site constraints are resolved.

Important site and safety considerations

- Sidewalk and street-tree work has a distinct municipal approval pathway.
- Professional consultation here does not include civil engineering, remediation design, permits or construction drawings.

A few things we would hold back

Sidewalk planters, any species: Not a private-land planting recommendation: South Philadelphia sidewalk planters generally require specific authorization; no site/permit verified.

Unapproved street tree, any species: Street-tree pit and species require Philadelphia Parks & Recreation process; not part of this private-bed palette.

Juncus effusus: A wet-area candidate only if actual water duration and subsurface conditions are professionally assessed.

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

Good Host Plants. Direct dated species/format listing, quantities not reserved, vendor asks email inquiry

ArcheWild. Wholesale grower/propagation list; may be future production, not available now

LandHealth Institute. Current local native nursery operation; exact species stock not verified

Before procuring street trees or placing planters in a public sidewalk, confirm the correct City process. The private planting palette does not authorize right-of-way construction, disturbance of utilities or soil remediation.

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.

Wholesale native plant nurseries; regional seed provenance

Landscaping with Native Plants

Plant Availability (updated 04 Nov 2026)

Woodland phlox (Phlox divaricata) trial

Lead in Residential Soils: Sources, Testing, and Reducing Exposure (2026)

Get a street tree

Philly Tree Plan

Philadelphia Complete Streets design handbook (2024)

Incorporate Pennsylvania Native Perennial Plants into the Garden

Creating a Hellstrip Garden (2026)

Carex for the Mid-Atlantic Region trial results

Heuchera americana trial

Complete Streets Design Handbook (2024), public-right-of-way encroachments

Tree-related forms and documents; approved street tree list