SITE-TO-SOURCE / SAMPLE CONSULTATION

A colorful coastal garden for changing moisture

Savannah, Georgia

$89 Single-Area Plant Palette • One coastal low-area border

Illustrative report for a fictional client and site; no real property inspection or purchase. Sample edition: 7 Nov 2026 | PHY-SAMPLE-009_Savannah_Wet_Border

Your recommended direction

Begin with Virginia sweetspire and moisture-flexible flowers or grasses near the upper bed. Reserve truly wet-loving choices for the center only if water behavior supports them. Treat it as one planting bed, not an engineered rain garden.

The client behind the question

Fictional client: Forrest Gump

"One strip beside my backyard lawn looks soggy after a hard rain, but it turns sandy and dry again. The grass doesn't do well there, so I thought flowers might be better. I'd like butterflies and hummingbirds and maybe a small shrub, but I don't want to make a pond or dig up the whole yard. Could you tell me which plants are happy with a little flooding and which ones would only work if the spot stays moist?"

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	Replace one patchy, alternately wet-and-dry lawn strip with a native flower-and-grass bed.
Site described	Approximately 14 x 22 ft, visible sand, about six hours of sun, rainwater gone by the following day in most storms.
Big challenges	Wet/dry swings, heat, patchy turf, unclear buried-service setbacks and visitors at the lawn edge.
What I want	Georgia native flowers, grasses, butterflies, occasional hummingbirds and at most a modest shrub.
Avoid	Big trees, thorns, invasive spread, harmful exposure to visiting dogs or children, and engineered rain-garden work.
Resources	About $250-$450 for first-round plants/materials; low-to-moderate care, planting after seasonal observation.

How we answered the client's questions

Client asked	How this report responds
Should the whole strip get the same plants?	No. Virginia sweetspire, Elliott lovegrass and smaller flowering plants suit different positions from the wettest pocket.
What about flowers through the year?	Dense blazing star, narrowleaf blue-eyed grass and orange coneflower create a more varied sequence where their moisture needs match.
Do I need a rain garden dug out?	No. This is selection for an existing bed, not grading, infiltration design or stormwater certification.
What if the bottom remains wet longer than I thought?	Soft rush, coastal sweetpepperbush or other wet candidates remain conditional until the actual water duration and space are confirmed.

What we clarified in the simulated written intake

Follow-up question	Client reply and resulting decision
How long does water usually last after heavy rain?	Client: Usually gone by the next morning, but I have not tracked several storms. Report decision: Use moisture-flexible plants first; keep permanently wet-site options conditional.
Do you know where the buried services and septic equipment are?	Client: No, I have not checked. Report decision: Confirm setbacks before digging or changing drainage.

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

One low 14 × 22 ft residential border in Savannah, wet after storms and sometimes dry between them. Sandy-feeling soil and mixed sunlight are homeowner descriptions, not laboratory findings.

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 Watch the bed after several storms; prolonged standing water or runoff near structures warrants expert assessment.

02 Place adaptable plants on the rim; use specialists only in the demonstrated moist pocket.

03 Choose four to six starting taxa, not the full twelve-option list.

Plant recommendations

12 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.

middle / upper back

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Virginia sweetspire *Itea virginica* Core	Flowering, flexible shrub for a moisture-variable back edge; works from wet to drier transitional soil. **Best fit:** sun to part shade; height 3-8 ft **Check:** Allow spreading room; can sucker. Keep away from structures and walkways.

middle / outer sun

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Elliott lovegrass *Eragrostis elliottii* Core	Airy silvery grass tolerating both episodic wetness and dry spells; structural texture. **Best fit:** full sun; height 2-3 ft **Check:** Needs good light; individual clumps can decline after flowering and reseed.

middle, brightest patch

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Dense blazing star *Liatris spicata* Core	Purple summer-to-fall spikes for pollinators, tolerating brief inundation in moist soils. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 2-5 ft **Check:** Do not place where water remains stagnant for extended periods; obtain straight species.

upper / moderately moist

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Orange coneflower *Rudbeckia fulgida* Core	Reliable yellow summer-fall bloom for the higher section that drains between storms. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 2-3 ft **Check:** Spreads into clumps; avoid deep or persistent water. Ask cultivar versus straight-species status.

outer / drier sun

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Hairawn muhly / pink muhly *Muhlenbergia capillaris* Core	Fine foliage and pink autumn haze on the drier, better-drained edge. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Do not put on the persistently wet bottom. Reserve enough width for a mature clump.

middle / front

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Narrowleaf blue-eyed grass *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* Core	Compact spring flowers and grassy foliage suit the view from the lawn. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 1.5-2 ft **Check:** Small flowers are subtle; can slowly colonize. Confirm exact species on sale.

wettest pocket only

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Soft rush *Juncus effusus* Conditional	Upright evergreen-like stems for soil that remains moist following storms. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 2-4 ft **Check:** Use only if the central pocket stays reliably moist; can spread by rhizomes.

back, consistently moist corner

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Coastal sweetpepperbush *Clethra alnifolia* Conditional	Fragrant summer-flowering shrub if a roomy, evenly moist corner truly exists. **Best fit:** sun to part shade; height 4-10 ft **Check:** Low drought tolerance; can sucker and get large. Do not buy if wetness disappears for long stretches.

brightest moist pocket

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Swamp rose-mallow *Muenchhusia moscheutos* Conditional	Large late-summer flowers when roots remain moist, not periodically parched. **Best fit:** full sun to part sun; height 3-7 ft **Check:** Needs adequate moisture and room; purchased hybrid hibiscus may not be this species. Kew accepted name differs from nursery label. This 2025 accepted combination is often sold under the established nursery name Hibiscus moscheutos; confirm the species identity.

moist part-shaded pocket

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Cardinalflower *Lobelia cardinalis* Conditional	Scarlet flowers for hummingbirds in consistently moist soil. **Best fit:** part sun / afternoon shade; height 2-5 ft **Check:** Alkaloids: toxic if ingested, including to dogs and cats. Withhold if visiting animals or children may mouth plants. Avoid dry summers.

contained outer rim

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Turkey tangle frogfruit *Phyla nodiflora* Alternative	Low flowering alternative to some mulch at the drier border; supports pollinators. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 1-6 in **Check:** Spreads vigorously and roots at nodes; do not use if tidy boundaries are essential.

roomy wet back corner

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis* Alternative	Wet-loving butterfly shrub if the site is actually moist for much of the season. **Best fit:** sun to part sun; height 3-8 ft (can exceed) **Check:** Use instead of, not alongside, another large shrub in this small bed; field-verify room and drainage.

How to put the recommendations to work

01 Observe stormwater disappearance and locate buried utilities.

02 Plant a small group along the wet-to-dry transition, with space for shrub expansion.

03 Recheck mid-summer soil moisture before adding wet-ground plants.

Important site and safety considerations

- A wet-plant label does not prove tolerance of drought or long-term inundation.
- Published nurseries have not confirmed specific quantities, nursery origin or current availability.

A few things we would hold back

Salvia lyrata: UGA coastal guide includes it, but POWO state distribution omits Georgia; omission does not establish absence. Verify a Georgia flora/voucher before marketing as locally native.

Iris pseudacorus: Yellow flag iris is not a native Georgia rain-garden replacement; ecological and spreading risks warrant exclusion.

Iris virginica: Valid wet-site native, but risk of ingestion/contact with rhizomes and need for sustained moisture make it a lower priority with child-access unknown.

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

All the Buzz Natives. vendor describes GA-ecotypical plants; item stock not established; Savannah area pickup or limited delivery

Florabundance Gardens. GNPS directory listing; inquire about desired exact species, sizes, pickup, and provenance

Mellow Marsh Farm. live online inventory displays forms/quantities, changes; $100 minimum; shipping/GA delivery unknown

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.

UGA: Coastal rain garden guide

Kew: Blue-eyed grass

Kew: Virginia sweetspire

Kew: Frogfruit

Kew: Elliott lovegrass

Kew: Sweetpepperbush

Kew: Swamp rose-mallow

Kew: Dense blazingstar