

# Ontario Native Garden: 10-Minute Site-Audit Checklist

## Phase 1: Solar & Exposure Mapping

- **Peak Sun Hours:** Does the area get 6+ hours of direct light? (Mark as: *Full Sun*)
- **Shadow Patterns:** Are there structures or tree canopies blocking afternoon sun?
- **Wind Tunnel Check:** Is the site exposed to harsh winter NW winds? (Critical for *Evergreens*)

## Phase 2: Substrate & Hydrology

- **The Squeeze Test:** Squeeze a handful of moist soil.
  - *Stays in a ball?* (Clay)
  - *Crumbles instantly?* (Sand)
  - *Spongy?* (Loam)
- **Drainage Speed:** Dig a 6" hole, fill with water. Does it drain in under an hour? (If no: *Wet-edge species needed*)
- **pH Baseline:** Use a digital tester. Is it Acidic (Shield) or Alkaline (Limestone)?

## Phase 3: Existing Eco-Context

- **Invasive Identification:** Spot any Garlic Mustard or Dog-strangling Vine to remove first.
- **Hardiness Zone Confirmation:** Verify your specific Ontario zone (e.g., 5b or 6a).
- **Keystone Anchor Spots:** Identify where a large Oak or Pine can serve as a structural hub.

## Phase 4: Shopping Strategy

- **Bloom Succession Gap:** Do I have at least one species for April, July, and September?
- **The "Straight Species" Rule:** Are my chosen plants wild types or cultivars (nativars)?