

The Native Groundcover Project: Master Checklist & Site Planner

Transform your thirsty turf into a self-sustaining ecosystem. Use this printable tracker to assess your yard, buy the right species, and install them flawlessly.

PART 1: Site Assessment

Before heading to the nursery, evaluate your planting zone to ensure you buy the right keystone species.

1. Sun Exposure (Check one):

Full Sun (6+ hours of direct sunlight) -> *Best for: Bearberry, Wild Strawberry, Prairie Smoke*

Part Shade (3-6 hours of sunlight) -> *Best for: Canada Anemone*

Full Shade (Under 3 hours of sunlight) -> *Best for: Wild Ginger, Bunchberry*

2. Soil Texture Test (Squeeze a handful of moist soil):

Forms a tight, sticky ball (Clay) -> *Needs rough compost for drainage.*

Falls apart immediately (Sand) -> *Needs leaf mold for moisture retention.*

Holds its shape but crumbles easily (Loam) -> *Perfect native soil.*

3. Hardiness Zone & Ecoregion:

My Zone (e.g., Zone 3, Zone 5): _____

My Region (e.g., Coastal, Carolinian, Prairie): _____

PART 2: Nursery Shopping List

Remember the Rule of 3: Mix at least three different species for biodiversity and resilience.

Species Name (Common & Latin)	Quantity (1 plant per sq. ft.)	Nursery Source
1.		

2.		
3.		
Notes/Alternatives:		

⚠ **STOP!** Did you check that none of these are invasive species (like Goutweed or Periwinkle)? Yes, checked!

PART 3: The 7-Step Installation Tracker

Take this into the garden. Check off each step as you complete it to avoid root death or weed invasion.

- **Step 1: No-Till Preparation.** Covered existing grass with overlapping cardboard (sheet mulching) to smother turf organically without destroying soil fungi.
- **Step 2: Soil Check.** Confirmed soil texture (from Part 1).
- **Step 3: Lean Amending.** Added compost for clay OR leaf mold for sand. (No synthetic fertilizers used!).
- **Step 4: Staggered Layout.** Placed pots in a dense, triangular, staggered pattern over the planting area to ensure a fast, weed-suppressing canopy.
- **Step 5: Dig & Place.** Dug holes through the decomposed cardboard layer. Set crowns perfectly level with the surrounding soil.
- **Step 6: Firming.** Pressed down firmly around the base of every single plant to eliminate hidden air pockets.
- **Step 7: Initial Mulch.** Applied a thin (1-inch) layer of shredded leaves to hold moisture for the first 6 months.

PART 4: First-Year Care Log

- **Watering:** Checked soil twice a week. Watered only when the top 2 inches felt completely dry.
- **Winter Prep:** Left all fallen leaves on the groundcover to insulate roots and provide habitat for overwintering pollinators.