



Quick Start - Choosing Plants

This is a brief overview of our plant grading system to match the right plant to the right place. For tips on assessing your Sunlight and Soil Moisture, visit [Exercises to Determine Site Conditions](#).

Each of our plants are graded based on the same scale that reflects the growing conditions they will perform best in. The amount of sunlight and soil moisture an area has is also referred to as the **site conditions**.

Native Plant Company Site Grading

Sunlight	Heavy Shade	Filtered Sun	Periodic Direct Light	4- 6 hours full sun	No shade at all
	1	2	3	4	5
Soil Moisture	Extremely Dry	Dry	Average	Moist	Often Saturated
	1	2	3	4	5

Sunlight Scale

1 Heavy shade	Areas that receive very little to no sunlight reaching them.
2 Filtered Sun	Areas where scattered or filtered sunlight is able to shine through. An example could be under large dense tree canopies like mature Oak trees.
3 Periodic Direct Light	Areas that receive less than 4 hours of sunlight. This can include areas under deciduous trees or trees with a more open canopy, like Pines, that let more light through. These areas may get up to 4 hours of direct sun.
4 4-6 Hours Full Sun	These areas have some protection from structures or tree cover to step them down from being a 5 on the scale. This may apply to your area if it receives more sun in the winter as nearby deciduous trees drop their leaves.
5 No Shade at All	Full uninterrupted sun year round. Very common in developed residential areas lacking shade trees or structures that block light. If this sounds like your yard, consider planting a tree grove to add shade!

Soil Moisture Scale

1 Extremely Dry	Includes beach dunes conditions with fast draining sand. There is no clay in the soil.
2 Dry	Very sandy and fast draining soil. The soil is very low in organic material and almost dust-like. Very common in developed neighborhoods with no irrigation. Dry soils are never wet for more than 24 hours after a rain.
3 Average	The soil has slightly more organic material like annual leaf litter that has broken down. It may have loam or clayey loam in it, but still has good drainage. If the area that you are planting in is regularly covered by lawn sprinklers or drip irrigation at least 3 times a week, it may be average. The soil gets slightly “spongy” when wet.
4 Moist	The biggest indicators of moist soil is poor drainage and high organic material. The soil holds moisture and is slow to dry out. It is possible for sandy soils to be moist if they’re close to a water table. These soils may have a higher clay amount and muddy feel when wet.
5 Wet	Wet soil has standing water for some part of the year. This can include low areas or areas around ponds. The soil is somewhat often covered by water and holds water for an extended period of time.

Tips:

Different areas around your property can have different site conditions, so it is important to observe each bed or planting area as their own.

Assess the area you would like to plant in, and plug this data into the [Plant Selector Tool](#) to show native plants that match your site conditions.

Don't stress about your assessment being perfect. Native plants are more forgiving and adaptable to varying conditions. **If you are unsure about your assessment, try to plant a few species and monitor their health before purchasing more plants.**

Visit **Exercises to Determine Site Conditions** for some additional tips to determine your site conditions.