

HABITAT MAKEOVER KIT™

SIMPLE ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

-prepared by ecology + vision, llc (version 1)

Project Name:			
Project Location:			
Date of Assessment:		Name of Consultant:	

1 – VEGETATION ASSESSMENT

1.1 – Record the number of native plant species identified in the yard across all vegetation layers: _____

1.2 – Percentage of native species: _____/10

Minimum 20% = 1 point

21-50% = 2 points

51-75% = 5 points

76-99% = 9 points

100% = 10 points

1.3 – Invasive species present: _____/5

0 species = 5 points, 1 species = 4 points, 2 species = 3 points, 3 species = 2 points, 4 species = 1 point, 5+ species = 0 points

**if any invasive species is estimated to be dominant = 0 points*

1.4 – Vegetation layers (*see instructions*): _____/6

1 point for each vegetation layer present (0 points for lawn only)

Add 1 bonus point if the ground layer includes native grass, sedge AND wildflower species

1.5 – Provide seasonal food choices: _____/5

1 point for each of the following provided: spring flowering species, summer flowering species, fall flowering species, berry/fruit producing species, seed producing species

1.6 – Host and pollinator bonus: _____/10

Add 2 points for the presence of each of these important native plant genus: Quercus, Asclepius*, Rudbeckia*, Solidago*, and Symphyotrichum (Aster)*

**a minimum of 2 different species OR 10 individuals in order to qualify for the credit*

2 – LAND ASSESSMENT

2.1 – Habitat area: _____/10

0 points = Less than 100 square feet

1 point = 100 square feet to 2,500 square feet

3 points = 2,500 square feet to ¼ acre

6 points = ¼ acre to 1 acre

10 points = over 1 acre

- 2.2 – Habitat fragmentation: _____/5
 0 points = property does display continuous habitat with neighboring properties AND habitat itself is fragmented significantly
 2.5 points = property displays continuous habitat with neighboring properties OR habitat itself is not fragmented significantly
 5 points = property displays continuous habitat with neighboring properties AND habitat itself is not fragmented significantly
- 2.3 – Sunlight diversity/availability: _____/4
 2 points = habitat area contains areas with sun and shade
 2 points = 50% of the habitat area receives at least 6 hours of sunlight

3 – HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FEATURES

- 3.1 – Water source _____/10
 1 point = small water source, such as a bird bath
 5 points = in-ground water feature, such as a rain garden or garden pond (min. 100 s.f.)
 10 points = Large natural water feature, such as a wetland, pond or stream
- 3.2 – Cover, shelter and brooding structure _____/10
 1 point each, up to 10 total points, for providing any of the following (or similar): large downed log, log/brush pile, dense shrub massing, coniferous plant, nesting structure*, boulder/stone outcropping, standing dead tree, etc.
**nesting structures must be cleaned annually and maintained free of house sparrows to qualify for the credit*
- 3.3 – Alternative food sources _____/5
 1 point each, up to 5 total points for providing any of the following: Quercus species, bird seed feeder*, suet feeder*, hummingbird feeder*, and squirrel feeder*
**manmade feeders must be maintained consistently with food supply to qualify for the credit*

4 – MANAGEMENT ADAPTATIONS

- 4.1 – Eliminate the use of pesticides throughout the property: _____/10
- 4.2 – Eliminate the use of non-organic fertilizers and soil amendments: _____/5
- 4.3 – Retain at least 30% of the habitat planting through the following season: _____/5

5 – TOTAL SCORE

- 5.1 Number of native species recorded from section 1.1: _____
- 5.2 Score tally from remaining section 1.2 – 4.3: _____/100
- 5.3 TOTAL HABITAT VALUE (5.1 + 5.2) _____
- 5.4 Desired Habitat Value: _____

Recommendations to Improve Habitat Value:

Consultant Signature: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE HABITAT MAKEOVER KIT™ SIMPLE ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

- 1.1 – Keep a list of all the species of plants encountered in the yard, separate natives from non-natives. Note any species that might be considered invasive.
- 1.2 – Figure the percentage of native plants by dividing the total number of native species identified by the total number of species found on the property. Include all planted plants and wild plants...weeds too! Do not include plants from vegetable, herb or fruit gardens.
- 1.3 – Invasive species can infest a site and out-compete more valuable native plants for light, water and nutrients. They can have significant negative impacts to biodiversity, which is the opposite of what we need for improved habitat. Inventory any invasive species identified at the site. To determine which plants are considered invasive visit <https://www.invasive.org/illinois/SpeciesofConcern.html>. If any invasive species are determined to be dominant throughout the habitat area, no points should be awarded.
- 1.4 – Assess the vegetation layers of the property, the more diversity in layers present the more benefit there is to habitat value. There are typically five layers to consider: 1. The Ground Layer – consisting of grasses, sedges and wildflowers as well as any ground-spreading vines; 2. The small/medium shrub layer (<5ft) – consisting of small shrubs like hypericum, low bush honeysuckle and hydrangea as well as all climbing vines; 3. The large shrub layer (5-15ft)– consisting of dense multi-stemmed large shrubs like blackhaw viburnum, serviceberry or witchazel; 4. The understory tree canopy (15-30ft) – consisting of small trees such as blue beech or hop hornbeam; and 5. The overstory tree canopy – consisting of large canopy trees such as oak and maple. An additional point can be gained from the Ground Layer if native grass, sedge and forb species are identified.
- 1.5 – It is important to provide adequate food for insects and birds during migration (spring and fall) as well as for resident species during the summer and winter. Look for plants that provide flowers for pollinators in spring, summer and fall. Look for plants that provide spring or fall fruits, including edible seed heads such as purple coneflower.
- 1.6 – There are a handful of native plants that are known havens for insects and birds. Identify any plants that are in the genus Quercus (oaks), Asclepias (milkweed), Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susans), Solidago (Goldenrods) and Symphyotrichum (Asters). Most species within these genus of plants are powerful supporters of both leaf-eaters and pollinators. To qualify for the credit, at least two different species from each genus OR a minimum of 10 individuals must be planted (excluding Quercus). If not currently present, you should recommend species from this genus for planting.
- 2.1 – Measure the amount of area of the property being evaluated for habitat, this should exclude the footprint of structures, driveways and permanent lawn areas. Larger areas can support more wildlife, therefore they are inherently more valuable in terms of habitat. Monarch Watch recommends that for Monarch habitat to be effective it should be a minimum of 100 square feet, therefore our minimum points for habitat size begins at 100 square feet
- 2.2 – As mentioned above, larger areas are inherently more valuable in terms of habitat. However, that value decreases when the habitat is fragmented and not continuous. It becomes more difficult for species of insects and mammals to migrate when fragmentation occurs. There are also certain

species that require large, non-interrupted tracts of natural area in order to reproduce. Smaller tracts of land can increase their habitat value by connecting to migration corridors or larger natural areas, such as a forest preserve or greenway. If a residential lot abuts a stormwater basin that is currently vegetated with turfgrass, encourage your client to talk to the HOA board about naturalizing the basin, which can add to the habitat value of their property.

- 2.3 – When a habitat area has a variety of sun conditions, a higher diversity of plant species can be planted in that area. According to Monarch Watch, butterflies and butterfly-supporting plants require a lot of sun. They recommend that at least some portion of a habitat area should receive at least 6 hours of sun per day, therefore having at least a portion of your site be sunny adds habitat value.
- 3.1 – All wildlife needs water to survive. Habitat value is increased when a water source is added and maintained. Water sources must be consistently maintained to qualify for the credit.
- 3.2 – Insects and birds require cover for protection from predation and structure to build nests. These features can be part of the natural habitat, such as dense shrub groupings or standing dead trees, or they can be added, such as logs, brush piles and bird houses. Bird houses must be cleaned out annually and maintained free of House Sparrows in order to qualify for the credit.
- 3.3 – Habitat value can be added to any landscape by providing alternate food sources for wildlife, such as bird feeders. Feeders must be maintained with appropriate food to qualify for the credit.
- 4.1 – The bulk of the habitat value from a landscape using native plants comes from the native insects' ability to eat the leaves or flowers of the native plants. One of the largest groups of pollinating insects is beetles, who start their lives as grubs underground. The common act of spreading "grub killer" on our lawns and landscape beds can decimate one of the most important pollinators on the property. Significant habitat value points are given for eliminating the use of pesticides in the landscape.
- 4.2 – Eliminating the use of non-organic fertilizers adds habitat value by eliminating harmful chemicals that can be ingested by birds and other wildlife. Ground feeding birds, such as morning dove, can easily intake granular fertilizers when feeding on seeds and insects on the ground. Fertilizers also cause serious environmental issues in our streams and lakes, which reduces the habitat value of those areas.
- 4.3 – Many of our native insects overwinter in dormant landscape materials and leaf litter. If we remove all of this material for aesthetic purposes, we must realize that we are also removing their winter habitat, and in some cases their eggs. Leaving at least a portion of the dormant plant material in place through the winter and well into the following growing season ensures that these insects have protection to survive the winter.