



Ecological Site Assessment

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Habitat is more than just environment and species. It includes soil, regional zoning, native plants and drainage, and also the behaviors and needs of people. Ecological landscape design assesses habitat from this point of view.

It starts by understanding the region. The best way is by observing it. Indigenous vegetation maps for any area of the country can be found online or from local gardening centers. There is also a wealth of information available from local and county extension offices and universities.

There are a few fundamental ways to assess a site ecologically. Look at where the sun rises and sets. Note from where wind and weather come. Sit back and evaluate views. Using a compass, map on-site and adjacent trees and their heights, as they will greatly affect site drainage.

Mature, native plants should rank highest on assessment evaluation and be preserved when possible. Stockpile topsoil for later use, as it contains important biota native to the region and is irreplicable. Native plants are adapted to and rely on this fungal and bacterial regime to fix and absorb nitrogen and other nutrients. Soil also contains seed from native grasses, wildflowers and weeds. Once distributed, it will have to be maintained. Soil can be tested for proper amendments later, especially if already disturbed.