

Plant Name: Little Bluestem

Scientific name: *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash

Short Description:

Little Bluestem is a native, warm-season perennial mid-grass with gray-green foliage and unique reddish bronze color in fall.

Description:

Little Bluestem grows well on a variety of soil types, including deep, shallow, sandy, fine textured, and rocky soils. It is a bunch type, native, warm-season, perennial mid grass, with a dense root system, and may reach heights of from 2 to 4 feet tall. Little Bluestem can be identified by its flat, bluish-colored basal shoots and its leaf blades which tend to fold. Mature plants have a reddish cast after frost. Little Bluestem is more drought resistant than Big Bluestem, and can be found in the lower rainfall areas of the Great Plains. Little Bluestem can be spread by seed, tillers, and underground rootstocks. It produces an abundance of high quality, palatable forage that is used for both hay and pasture. Little Bluestem should not be grazed closer than 4 to 6 inches during the growing season. The seed is mature in late September and October. It can be seeded alone or in mixtures with tall and short grasses

Taxonomic Classification:

Little Bluestem

Kingdom	Plantae
Subkingdom	Tracheobionta
Superdivisio	Spermatophyta
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Lillosidea
Subclass	Commelinidae
Order	Cyperales
Family	Poaceae
Genus	<i>Schizachyrium</i>
Species	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> (Michx.)

Plant Characteristics:

Height:	24 to 48 inches
Growth habit:	bunchgrass
Bloom period:	late summer
Sun requirement:	full sun
Leaf foliage color:	gray-green
Seeds per pound:	255,000
Minimum soil temperature for germination:	50 to 55 F°
Soil pH range:	5 to 8.4
Planting Rate:	1 lb PLS/3000 sq ft or 7 to 9 lbs PLS/ acre
Planting Depth:	¼ to ½ inch
Planting season:	March to May



Use:

Erosion control: The persistence of Little Bluestem in a wide range of geographical regions, soils, and climates makes it very useful in for conservation applications. It is commonly used on revegetation areas, buffer strips, and very marginal soils for soil stabilization.

Livestock: Little bluestem when grazed or hayed prior to seed stem elongation makes good quality forage. When heavily grazed with more palatable species such as Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem will increase in the population over time.

Wildlife: Seeds of Little Bluestem are consumed by many species of upland birds, and the vegetation also provides important cover from predators.

Landscape: Little Bluestem makes an attractive landscape species whether it is in small groups or large mass plantings. The unique reddish-orange color of the foliage after frost makes it one of the most popular of the native grasses.

Commerically Available Cultivars:

'Aldous' (Kansas)

'Cimmaron' (Kansas, Oklahoma)

'Blaze' (Nebraska, Kansas)

'Camper' (Nebraska, Kansas)

Native Ecotypes