

Plant Name: Big Bluestem

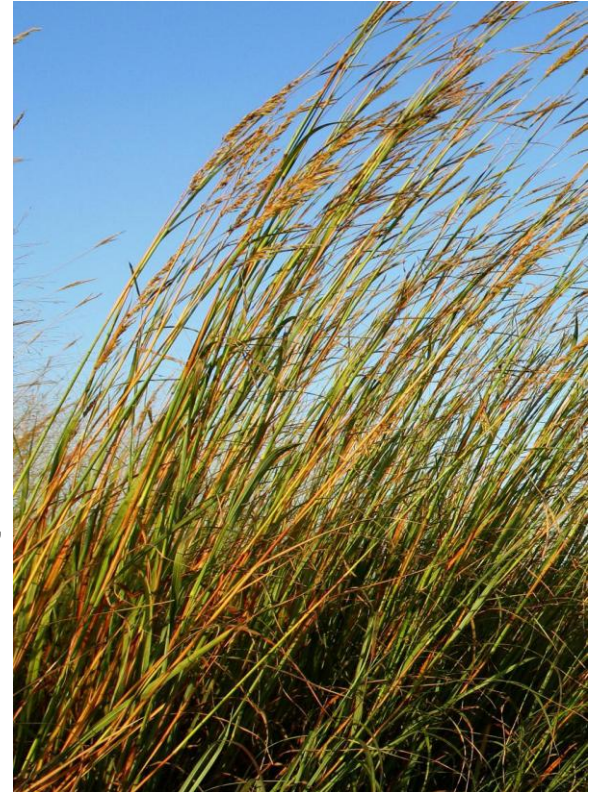
Scientific name: *Andropogon gerardii* Vitman

Short Description:

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Big Bluestem is a native warm-season, rhizomatous, perennial bunchgrass. It is a tall grass with short scaly underground stems and a strong, deep root system. Big Bluestem begins growth in late April, and stalks 4 to 6 feet tall appear from late August to October. Big Bluestem grows in large clumps, is extremely leafy, and can be found growing on most all the better soils in the true prairie belt. The stem is round and has a reddish tint. The seed head forms three finger-like branches, giving it the shape of a turkey's foot. Big Bluestem produces a high quality, palatable hay when cut before it becomes stemmy and the seed head forms. It also provides for a highly palatable and nutritious pasture, but should not be grazed closer than 6 to 8 inches during the growing season. The seed head matures in late September and October. Big Bluestem can be seeded alone or in mixtures with other tall and mid grasses.



Taxonomic Classification:

Big Bluestem

Kingdom	Plantae
Subkingdom	Tracheobionta
Superdivision	Spermatophyta
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Lillosidea
Subclass	Commelinidae
Order	Cyperales
Family	Poaceae
Genus	<i>Andropogon</i>
Species	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> Vitman

Plant Characteristics:

Height:	48 to 72 inches
Growth habit:	bunchgrass
Bloom period:	mid- late summer
Sun requirement:	full sun
Leaf foliage color:	green
Seeds per pound:	165,000
Minimum soil temperature for germination:	50 to 55 F ^o
Soil pH range:	6.0 to 7.5
Planting Rate:	7 to 12 PLS lbs/acre
Planting Depth:	¼ to ½ inch
Planting season:	March to May

Use:

Erosion control: Big bluestem is an excellent choice for soil conservation applications. It is generally planted as a component with various other warm season grasses such as indiagrass, switchgrass, and little bluestem.

Livestock: Big bluestem is highly palatable to many species of livestock. Its preference over other species of grasses can lead to selective grazing and the decrease in population relative to these other species.

Wildlife: Many mammals and upland birds use it for nesting and escape cover in late summer and winter. Big bluestem resists lodging and provides excellent spring nesting habitat for birds.

Landscape: Big bluestem is commonly planted in urban and rural landscapes as a low-maintenance species for accent plants and well as in large groups. The early dark green color, uniquely attractive seed head, and late season reddish color provide for a year around attractive display.

Commercially Available Cultivars:

'Kaw' (southern type, KS southward)

'Pawnee' (northern type, NE northward)

'Rountree' (northern type, NE northward)

Native ecotypes