

Little Bluestem

- ◆ Highly drought resistant
- ◆ Excellent wildlife habitat
- ◆ Moderately shade tolerant
- ◆ Beautiful colors throughout the fall
- ◆ Great for low prairies, roadsides, near creeks & lakes
- ◆ Resistant to trampling



7-8 PLS lbs/Acre

June—August



**LA CROSSE**
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Little Bluestem

DESCRIPTION

Little Bluestem is a very common native grass found in almost all states of the US. A smaller grass than Big Bluestem, it is slightly less palatable, but more drought resistant. A bunch-forming grass, Little Bluestem has a dense root system which enables it to grow on even the poorest and roughest ground. The stem and growth from previous years remain standing where it weathers to create a mulch. Growing best on medium or dry soils, new shoots are identifiable in early April and maturity is reached by late August to October. Little Bluestem is highly desirable for grazing and hay.

APPLICATION

Little Bluestem is drought resistant due to an extensive, dense root system. It is often found on very poor sites and in the eastern US, it is found growing as an understory in the pine-deciduous forests. However, as shade increases, Little Bluestem decreases. The seeds have been found in sites that have been without a grassland present as long as 37 years later. The sites on which Little Bluestem is found are generally considered poor and are slightly acidic with a pH of 5.5—6 being the preferable level.

USES

Little Bluestem is typically found on dry, upland sites and along hillsides and ridges. It grows from both seeds and tillers in areas that receive from 10-40 inches of precipitation a year. Best growth is achieved when temperatures range from 68—90° F.

SEEDING

Rates: 7-8 PLS lbs/Acre. on new seeding.

Depth: Plant the seed no more than 1/2 inch deep. Emerging seedlings lack the strength to push through too much overlying soil. More seed has been lost to poor planting practices than anything else; this is especially true of seed depth.

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Soil Preparation: For the best conservation practice, no-till the seed into the stubble of a previous crop or the existing stand of another species that has been successfully eradicated. Pay close attention to previous land use practices. If a row crop has been planted for many years in succession a herbicide carryover is possible. If you feel you must plow up the site before planting, prepare your seedbed like you would for any other crop. The seedbeds need to be firm, not fluffy, so the seed will not be planted at an inappropriate depth. Use a cultipacker to firm your seedbed or some other type of roller that will create a smooth planting area that is not too hard.

NPK requirement: We do not recommend the use of fertilizer the first year, at least not nitrogen. Moderate levels of phosphorus and potassium are beneficial, especially for root establishment, which is a primary activity of the plant the first year. Use a soil test to help you decide that rats. Fertilizer may be applied the second year to enhance vigor and production of forage. It is not necessary to fertilize at all, but stand strength may be compromised without it.

Weed Control: We recommend a controlled burn every 1-3 years if possible. If not, then a mowing pattern should be established in order to control woody species invasion and prevent thatch build up. If you mow, mow no lower than 8 inches and no later than August 1.

Grazing: Rotational grazing or flash grazing is another good management tool. Care should be taken to prevent the livestock from grazing the warm season grass to a level that would not rebound after grazing. Use 6 inches as your stopping point and a re-growth of 12 inches.

IDENTIFICATION

Clum: Solid, 20-60 inches tall, slightly flattened, greenish-blue to purplish, branching above, leafy base.

Blades: Linear, 2-12 inches long, acuminate, scabrous (rough) on the upper surface and margins. The leaves are usually folded—sometimes with the edges rolled backward, toward the lower side.

Sheath: Shorter than the internode, usually glabrous, keeled.

Ligule: A fringed membrane, truncate.

Inflorescence: Numerous branches on each clum, each branch terminated by a spike-like raceme 1-2 inches long. The rachis joints and the margins of the pedicels are hairy.

Spikelets: Paired. The sessile spikelet is perfect and .2—.3 inches long; the pediceled spikelets are staminate or sterile, .12—.24 inch long, and have flattened pedicels.

Awn: The awn on the upper lemma of the sessile spikelet is .3—.6 inches long and bent or twisted.



Area of Adaptation

