

## Evaluation, Selection and Release of Big Bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*

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Released cultivars of big bluestem, 'Kaw', 'Champ', 'Pawnee', and 'Rountree' do not perform as well in the Ozark regions of Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas and Oklahoma as they do closer to their origins. Big bluestem plants from this Ozark region were collected in 1987 and evaluated from 1988-1998. The assembly involved 4,400 plants transplanted into a space plant nursery with two replications and six plants per replication. The collection was evaluated for vigor, insect and disease, lodging, maturity date and seed production. The objective of this collection is to assemble, evaluate, develop and release an adapted selection and/or selections of big bluestem for conservation use in the following Major Land Resource Areas: 116A, 116B, 117, 118 and 119.

The results to date have been the composite release (Source Identified) of 'OH-370' Germplasm big bluestem and the selected release of 'OZ-70' Germplasm big bluestem. 'OH-370' Germplasm big bluestem was released for diversity in native plantings for wildlife, prairie establishment and CRP. 'OZ-70' Germplasm big bluestem was released as an improved selection for pasture and hay. Upcoming releases are a tall, erect, lodging resistant selection for wind barriers and a short selection for buffers, filters, and wildlife.

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