

Collecting Virginia Wildrye

Virginia wildrye *Elymus virginicus* is a native, cool-season, perennial bunchgrass which grows 2-3 feet in height. It prefers moist soils, heavier soil textures, and is shade tolerant. Prime habitat includes bottomlands, low prairies, stream banks, and edges of woods or woody draws. It is found in scattered locations on native sites throughout North and South Dakota, and Minnesota. Identifying characteristics include: spikes stiffly upright and 2-6 inches long; awns or no awns; usually two spikelets per node; heavy glumes (horseshoe-shaped) bowed at the base; and short, rigid ligules. Canada wildrye is different as it has longer awns, narrower leaf blades, shorter ligules, and a nodding seed head.



Spike seed head of Virginia wildrye

Photo by Mike Hallock

The PMC is requesting your help in Virginia wildrye collection. One seed collection per county is sufficient. Collect from several plants if possible. One hundred seeds per collection is adequate. Collection site/location information is requested. Prime time for seed collection is mid-July to mid-August. Seed collection envelopes are available from the PMC.

There are no developed northern seed sources of Virginia wildrye available commercially. Conservation uses include pasture and hayland planting, wildlife habitat, range seeding, riparian planting, and conservation cover. Mark your calendar for a day this summer to challenge your plant identification skills and find a native source of Virginia wildrye in your county!

Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist

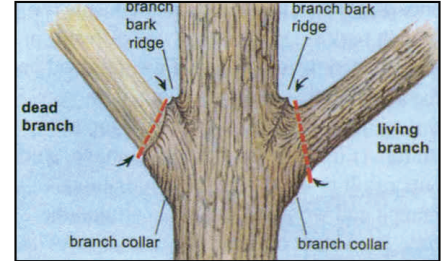
Conservation

NRCS is the only USDA agency with conservation in its title. It was 60 years ago that Aldo Leopold wrote "conservation is a state of harmony between man and land." We need to keep striving towards this harmony. The talk of global warming suggests that some harmony is lacking. Conservation has taken on a broader aspect, including material and energy conservation. Conserving our resources is something we can also do at home. Think about what you can do to make a difference. Even little things help. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours. Recycling a 4-foot stack of newspapers will save a good-sized tree. Planting trees on your property is still a good practice. Celebrate Earth Day!

Mike Knudson, Forester

Pointers on Pruning

Early spring is a good time to prune many trees and shrubs, though light pruning can be done at any time of the year. Broken, dead, weak or heavily shaded branches can be trimmed with little



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or no effect on the plant. Unwanted growth, such as double leaders, is most easily removed while they are small. Small cuts heal over sooner. Examples of plants to prune in the spring include most fruit trees, as well as tall trees, such as green ash, bur oak and hackberry. Fruit growers prune to get bigger, better fruit and to prolong the life of the trees. Apples are bigger and redder if they and the leaves on the same spur are exposed to high light. Another reason to prune fruit trees is to make it easier to pick the fruit. Trees and shrubs that should be pruned in the summer include maples (box elder), walnuts, birches, elms, and poplars. Shrubs that flower in the spring on one year-old wood, such as lilacs, honeysuckles and forsythia should be pruned immediately after blooming. For more information on pruning, read 'Pruning Trees and Shrubs' by Ronald C. Smith and Dave DeCock, NDSU Extension Service, publication H-1036.

Mike Knudson, Forester

Spring Info

Publications related to various topics are available from the Plant Materials Program. The onset of spring brings new plantings. Brochures available from the Bismarck PMC which are particularly helpful for anyone planting grass, looking for seed, or wanting landscaping information include:



- ♦ *5 Keys to Successful Grass Seeding*
- ♦ *Conservation Seed/Plant Vendors of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota*
- ♦ *Prairie Landscaping Seed/Plant Vendors*
- ♦ *Native Grasses for Prairie Landscaping*
- ♦ *Rain Gardens*
- ♦ *Living Landscapes in North Dakota: A Guide to Native Plantscaping* (Minnesota and South Dakota editions of this publication have been developed. Check with your state office for more information.)

Contact the PMC for hard copies or visit the website (listed above) for these publications or any others you are seeking.

Nancy Jensen, Agronomist