

Registration of Southlow Michigan Germplasm Switchgrass

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Southlow Michigan germplasm switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) (Reg. No. GP-97, PI 642395) was released 19 September 2001 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This Source Identified Class (natural track) germplasm is eligible for seed certification as a source-identified release under Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) guidelines (AOSCA, 2003). Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass was given the designation ACC: 9084512 by USDA-NRCS and determined "OK to release" when evaluated through the "Environmental Evaluation of NRCS Plant Releases" worksheet.

Switchgrass is a cross-pollinated, perennial, warm-season bunch grass with erect culms 1 to 2 m, rarely to 3 m tall, and spreading from scaly creeping rhizomes. A dense mat of white, silky hairs extends from the ligule to the upper leaf surface. The seedhead is an open, spreading panicle (Hitchcock and Chase, 1950; USDA-NRCS, 2006).

Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass is a multi-origin native germplasm with G0 seed assembled from 11 native stands (as designated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources) in the southern half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula in 1999. The purpose of the assembly was to provide a genetically diverse switchgrass seed source representing populations that are native to Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Seeds were mixed and planted in a single crossing block. Seed harvested from this crossing block was released as Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass. There was no purposeful selection during seed col-

lection and production, although inadvertent selection may have occurred due to the timing and quantity of seed harvested from each source. The Southlow Michigan epithet denotes its origin in southern Lower Michigan.

Switchgrass is native to all the United States except California and the Pacific Northwest. It attracts insects; provides food, nesting, escape, and winter cover for birds and small mammals; and is a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies. As a native species composite it will likely be useful in restoration and diversification of native habitats and for erosion control. Moreover, it will provide source material for developing cultivars for bioenergy production and will augment seed availability in Michigan for Federal and State programs (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and Michigan Landowner Incentive Program) that require or encourage the use of verified, regionally-sourced native grasses. Its known area of adaptation is the southern half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Limited quantities of seed are available on request from Dave Burgdorf (dave.burgdorf@mi.usda.gov) for five years after registration with CSSA. Afterward, seed will be made available from the National Plant Germplasm System. Recipients of seed are asked to make appropriate recognition of the source of germplasm if it is used in the development of a new cultivar, germplasm, parental line, or genetic stock.

References

- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies. 2003. Operational procedures, crop standards and service program publication. <http://www.aosca.org/2004%20Yellow%20Book,%20pdf.pdf>; verified 9 Oct. 2007.
- Hitchcock, A.S., and A. Chase. 1950. Manual of the grasses of the United States. 2nd ed. U.S. Gov. Print. Off., Washington, DC.
- USDA-NRCS. 2006. The PLANTS Database <http://plants.usda.gov>; verified 9 Oct. 2007.

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