

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
CADILLAC, MICHIGAN

and

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING, MICHIGAN

NOTICE OF RELEASE OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN GERMPASM LITTLE BLUESTEM
SOURCE IDENTIFIED CLASS OF NATURAL GERMPASM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) announce the release of a source identified ecotype of little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx)) for the Great Lakes region.

As a source identified release, this plant will be referred to as Southwest Michigan Germplasm little bluestem to document its original collection locations. Southwest Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is released as a source identified type of certified seed (natural track). It is a composite release that has been assigned the NRCS accession 9084511.

This alternative release procedure is justified because sources and supplies of Michigan ecotype little bluestem are very limited and unable to meet the demand for this product. Propagation material of this ecotype is needed for ecosystem restoration and enhancement. The potential for immediate use is extremely high.

Collection Site Information: Seed was collected from native stands (as designated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division) of little bluestem within the southern half of Michigan's lower peninsula. Original accession numbers and site locations are listed in *Attachment A*.

Ecotype Description: Southwest Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is a composite of several little bluestem collections and has features consistent with the species. It is a perennial, warm season bunch grass that grows from 2 – 4 feet tall. It has a dense, fibrous root system and flat, narrow basal stems. Sheaths are purplish at the base; ligules are small and membranous. Leaves are slightly folded and become reddish-brown at maturity. The white, tufted seedheads are born in a raceme.

Ecological Considerations and Evaluations: Southwest Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is native Michigan plant material that has undergone no purposeful selection therefore should not differ in rate of spread, seed production, vigor nor behavior from naturally occurring little bluestem in this area. Southwest Michigan Germplasm was determined "OK to release" when evaluated through the "Environmental Evaluation of NRCS Plant Releases" worksheet.

Anticipated Conservation Use: The anticipated uses of Southlow Michigan Germplasm include providing food/cover for wildlife, increasing species diversity, controlling erosion and restoring native plant environments.

Little bluestem attracts insects and provides seed that are used as food sources by songbirds, gamebirds and small mammals. Many wildlife species also utilize little bluestem for nesting and winter cover. As this is a native plant species and composite it will be useful as a component in the restoration and diversification of native habitats, particularly Southern Michigan, its source of origin. Because of little bluestem's deep fibrous root system it may also be useful in combination with other native warm and cool season grasses for erosion control.

Anticipated Area of Adaptation: This species is found in dry open areas throughout much of the United States, and a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies. Southlow Michigan Germplasm's anticipated area of adaptation is the Northeastern US, but likely will be used primarily in the southern half of Michigan's lower peninsula.

Availability of Plant Materials: Seed stock of Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem will be maintained cooperatively by the USDA NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and made available to qualified parties for increase purposes. To request seed or further information contact:

USDA NRCS

David Burgdorf

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References:

Gleason H. and A. Conquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. 2nd Edition. Bronx, New York: The New York Botanical Garden. 910 pp.

Voss, E. G. 1972. Michigan Flora Part 1: Gymnosperms and Monocots. Cranbrook Institute of Science. Bloomfield Hills, MI. 488 p.

Prepared by:

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Signatures for release of:

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx))

Ronald C. Williams, State Conservationist
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
East Lansing, Michigan

Date

K. L. Cool, Director
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Lansing, Michigan

Date

Diane Gelburd, Ecological Sciences Division Director
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington, D.C.

Date

Marilyn Shy, Executive Director
Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
Cadillac, MI

Date

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Attachment A: Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem Accessioning and Collection Site Information

Collection	Accession No.	Collection Site Information			
		County	Location	Section	Township