



Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium
(Michx.) Nash



Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem

The USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center (PMC), the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources released a source-identified ecotype of little bluestem for the Great Lakes region in 2001.

Description

Southlow Michigan Germplasm has features consistent with the species. It is a perennial, warm-season bunch grass that grows from 2- to 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 seed heads are born in a raceme.

Source

Seed was collected from 16 native stands of little bluestem (as designated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division) within the southern half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Conservation Uses

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is useful as a component in the restoration and diversification of native habitats, particularly in Southern Michigan, its source of origin. Michigan NRCS technical specialists have determined that Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is useful or potentially useful with these Conservation Practice Standards:

- Conservation Cover (327)
- Contour Buffer Strips (332)
- Critical Area Planting (342)
- Cross Wind Trap Strips (589C)
- Early Successional Habitat
- Development/Management (647)
- Field Border (386)
- Filter Strip (393)
- Forage and Biomass Planting (512)
- Hedgerow Planting (422)
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603)
- Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats (643)
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

Area of Adaptation and Use

This species is found in dry open areas throughout much of the United States and is a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies.

The primary utilization area for Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is the southern Great Lakes region.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem can be established by seed. Little bluestem seeds have fluffy appendages that make the seed difficult to plant using a standard grain drill. A grain drill with a fluffy seed box is recommended for mechanical planting. Seed can be broadcast and cultipacked as well. Seeding rate for little bluestem is 2 to 5 lbs/a PLS. Increase seeding rate by 10% if broadcast seeding methods are used. Care should be taken to limit seeding depth to no more than ¼ inch in most soils and to ensure adequate seed-to-soil contact. Weed control during establishment is critical. Mowing

and use of registered herbicides will aid in weed control. Always read and follow herbicide label directions.

Ecological Considerations

No insect or disease problems have been observed on Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem.



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Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem Being Harvested

Seed and Plant Production

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem produces seed annually. Seed can be harvested mechanically with a combine or brush stripper. Timing is critical as mature seed can fall off of the plant. Seed cleaning can be done using a fanning mill. Using a debearder to remove the fluffy appendages will aid in seed cleaning and handling.

Availability

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem, as well as other Rose Lake PMC releases, is available from commercial suppliers. Rose Lake PMC does not sell releases to the general public, although small quantities of seed are available to commercial seed or nursery growers for increase purposes.

For more information, contact:
Rose Lake Plant Materials Center
7472 Stoll Road, East Lansing, MI 48823
Phone: 517-641-6300
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Citation

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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov/>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

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