

Southlow Michigan Germplasm Switchgrass

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD), and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) announce the release of a source-identified ecotype of switchgrass, (*Panicum virgatum* L.) for the Great Lakes Region.

As a source-identified release, this plant will be referred to as Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass to document its original collection location in the southern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass is released as a source-identified type of certified seed (natural track). It is a composite release that has been assigned the NRCS accession number 9084512.

The alternative release procedure is justified because sources and supplies of Michigan ecotype switchgrass 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

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

Ecotype Description

Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass is a composite of several switchgrass collections and has features consistent with the species. It is a perennial, warm season bunch grass with short, hard, scaly rhizomes. Stems are erect, often reddish to purplish at the base and can reach a height of seven feet. A dense mat of white, silky hairs extends from the ligules onto the upper leaf surface. The inflorescence is open, freely branched and pyramidal.

Ecological Considerations and Evaluations

Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass is a native Michigan plant material that has undergone no purposeful selection; therefore it should not differ in rate of spread, seed production, vigor, nor behavior from naturally occurring switchgrass in this area. It has been determined "OK to release" using environmental criteria adopted by the NRCS Plant Materials Program.

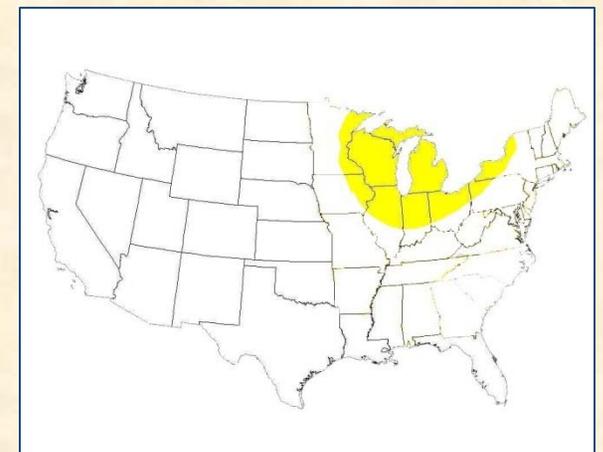


Anticipated Conservation Use

The anticipated use of this switchgrass includes providing food/cover for wildlife, increasing species diversity, controlling erosion and restoring native plant environments. Switchgrass attracts insects and provides seeds that are used as a food source by songbirds, game birds, and small mammals. Many wildlife species also utilize switchgrass for nesting, escape 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 in Southern Michigan, its source of origin. Switchgrass may also be useful in combination with other native warm and cool season grasses for erosion control because of its massive root system.

Anticipated Area of Adaptation

This species is found in dry to moist open areas throughout much of the United States and is a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies. Its primary utilization area is expected to be the southern Great Lakes area.





For More Information

Please visit our Plant Materials website to find more information on using plants to solve conservation problems.\

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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**Southlow
Michigan
Germplasm
Switchgrass**

A source-identified conservation plant



**Rose Lake
Plant Materials
Center**

East Lansing, Michigan

Availability of Plant Materials

Seed stock of the Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass will be maintained cooperatively by the USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and made available to commercial growers.

For further information, please contact the Plant Materials Specialist at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center.

