

Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the 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.) Nash for the Great Lakes region.



This source identified release is referred to as **Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem** to document its original collection location in the southern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is released as a sourced identified type of certified seed (natural track). It is a composite release that has been assigned the NRCS accession number 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.

Ecotype Description

Southlow 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 two to four 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.

Ecological Considerations and Evaluation

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem 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 little bluestem in this area. Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem has been determined "OK to release" using environmental evaluation criteria adopted by the NRCS Plant Materials program.

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 is used as a food source by songbirds, game birds 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. Little bluestem may also be useful in combination with other warm and cool season grasses for erosion control because of its massive root system.

Anticipated Area of Adaptation

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. Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestems' primary utilization area is expected to be the southern Great Lakes area.



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.



For More Information

Visit the NRCS Plant Materials Program website to learn more about using plants to address conservation problems.

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

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*A source-identified
conservation plant.*



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