



Plant Collection Information Sheet

Switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*

Scientific Name: *Panicum virgatum* L.

Common Name: switchgrass

Morphological Characteristics:

- native, perennial
- tall, upright
- warm season grass
- rhizomatous
- forms dense clumps and will reach a height of 3-6 feet
- two types - upland, lowland
- lowland types - more robust, larger stems, wide, flat leaves up to 36 inches, favors wet sites
- upland types - finer stems and leaves up to 30 inches, dryer upland sites, smaller growth form
- seedhead - open panicle 10 -14 inches long
- adapted to all kinds of soils from clay to fine sands
- lowland types will tolerate poorly drained soils, naturally wet sites, flooded areas, perched water tables and saline sites
- begins growth in March and will continue to grow up until the first killing frost
- seed ready for harvest in the mid-summer and fall
- plants turn a straw color during fall and into winter



Steve Hurst @ USDA-NRCS
PLANTS Database

Conservation Use:

Why collect this plant?

In Louisiana there is a lack of locally-adapted native (ecotypic) plant materials for use in revegetation projects. The **Louisiana Native Plant Initiative (LNPI)** was established to collect, evaluate and release new plant materials for use in Louisiana. The goals of the **LNPI** are to conserve a vanishing natural resource and provide an essential step in the development of a native plant industry in Louisiana. Commercial growers will then be able to supply plant material for restoration, revegetation, roadside plantings and the ornamental plant industry that are adapted to the state.

Louisiana NRCS in cooperation with **LNPI** has identified switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* as a plant meeting project objectives. Plant and seed collections supporting **LNPI** are targeted for all Louisiana Parishes.

Future ecotype development will benefit the following conservation practice standards: 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat management; 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management; 342 Critical Area Planting; 562 Recreation Area Improvement; 550 Range Planting; 327 Conservation Cover; 643 Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats; 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management; 601 Vegetative Barrier; 590 Nutrient Management; and others.

Your assistance in collecting this plant helps support the NRCS conservation practice standards which are employed daily to conserve the natural resources of Louisiana!

Centers Requesting Seed:

Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

How to Collect Seed:

1. Identify native plant stands in your area. Use field guides and websites for helpful photos.
2. Determine if seed is mature. Mature seed is typically dry and will easily separate from the seed head.
3. Hand strip mature seed by grasping the bottom of the seed head then gently pulling away from the base of the plant. Deposit seed in a brown paper sack. Collect seed from a minimum of 30 to 50 plants.
4. Label each collection as it is made so collections do not get mixed up. Information required includes: Collector's name, number of plants collected, location (parish, city, highway, and GPS coordinates), site description (soil type, slope, and plants growing in association).
5. Complete NRCS-ECS-580; Plant Collection Information Form and mail with collected seeds to the NRCS Plant Materials Center requesting the species.

USDA-NRCS

Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center
438 Airport Road
Galliano, LA 70354

Helpful Tips:

Look for plants that display differences in color, height, or forage abundance and record observations. Differences in growing site or location should be made into separate collections if they are separated by more than 1 mile between sites.

Other Photos:

<http://plants.usda.gov>

<http://www.noble.org/imagegallery/index.html>

<http://www.wildflower.org>



Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS. 1991. *Southern wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species*. South National Technical Center, Fort Worth, TX.



Ted Bodner @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / James H. Miller and Karl V. Miller. 2005. *Forest plants of the southeast and their wildlife uses*. University of Georgia Press., Athens.