



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Plant Materials Program

# Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass

*Panicum virgatum* L.

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center



*Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass*

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources released a source-identified ecotype of switchgrass in September, 2001 for the Great Lakes region.

## 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.

## Source

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.

## Conservation Uses

The anticipated use of this switchgrass include 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 food sources by songbirds, gamebirds 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.

## Area of Adaptation and Use

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.

## Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass can be established by seed. Seed can be planted with a grain drill or broadcast and cultipacked. Seed rate for switchgrass is 2-5 lb. PLS/Acre. Care should be taken to limit seeding depth to no more than 1/4" in most soils. 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 economically important insects or diseases have been observed on Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass.



*Close-up of Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass*

### Seed and Plant Production

Southlow Michigan Germplasm produces seed annually. Seed can be harvested mechanically with a combine. Timing is critical as mature seed can fall off of the plant. Seed cleaning can be done using a fanning mill.



*Field of Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass*

### Availability

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



*A field of Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass*

*For more information, contact:*  
Rose Lake Plant Materials Center  
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Release Brochure for Southlow Michigan Germplasm switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI 48823 Published September, 2001, Revised, January, 2012,

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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