



A Conservation Plant Released by the Agricultural Research Service Southern Plains Range Research Station, Woodward, Oklahoma; and the Natural Resources Conservation Service James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center, Knox City, Texas

'Ahring' Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium (Michx.) Nash

Ahring little bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash] was released in 2021 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Southern Plains Range Research Station, Woodward, Oklahoma; and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center (PMC), Knox City, Texas.

Description

Ahring little bluestem is genetically diverse, contains an upright and open canopy structure, is tolerant of a soil pH of 8, and shows tolerance to leaf rust and culm lodging. The plant canopy height averages 4.2 ± 0.50 ft while the canopy width averages 2.20 ± 0.50 ft. Approximately 72% of culm leaf blades are greater than 4.0 in long, 77% of leaf blades are less than 0.20 in wide, 74% of leaves are attached at an angle of less than 90° , and approximately 70% of the population has few if any leaves at the base of the culm.



Figure 1: Little bluestem at the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center near Knox City, Texas. Photo by Brandon Carr.

Source

Ahring little bluestem was selected through two cycles of recurrent selection from little bluestem germplasm UO-2 (PI 676267).

Conservation Uses

Ahring little bluestem is useful for wildlife habitat, grazing, soil stabilization, water conservation, renewable energy, and horticultural landscapes in the south central and southern Great Plains.

Area of Adaptation and Use

This species is adapted to USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 and 7 of the South Central and Southern Great Plains of the USA.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

The full seedling rate for Ahring little bluestem is 3.4 pounds of pure live seed (PLS) per acre. When planting this as a component of a seed mixture, the seeding rate should be adjusted to the desired percent of the mix. Plant seed $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. Begin seedbed preparation one year prior to spring planting to reduce weed problems during the first year of establishment. Work the site as necessary during the summer or early fall prior to establishment to create a firm weed-free seedbed. Complete seedbed preparation in the fall to allow time for the soil to settle and accumulate moisture. Use herbicides to control weeds in minimum and no-till plantings.

Defer grazing for about 12 months to allow plants to become well established. Do not graze lower than 6-8 inches. Contact your local U.S. Department of Agriculture-NRCS field office for assistance in planning and applying prescribed grazing plans.

Use soil test recommendations to determine the amount of fertilizer to apply to sustain a medium soil test level. Do not apply nitrogen during the establishment year because it will encourage weed growth. Weeds may be controlled by mowing or with herbicides. Consult your local extension weed specialist for recommendations on herbicides for little bluestem.

Ecological Considerations

No severe insect or disease problems have been observed in Ahring little bluestem. This grass is primarily a bunchgrass that will spread some by seed. Random plants in a natural landscape are usually not considered undesirable because it is a native species.

Seed and Plant Production

Seed harvest is possible using a variety of methods and implements. Seed ripens indeterminately. A Flail-Vac Seed harvester or Shelbourne header can collect the ripe seed without damaging or eliminating the ability to make subsequent harvests. Another method for harvesting seed is direct combining when most of the seed is mature.

Availability

For conservation use: Seed will be available from the USDA-ARS, Southern Plains Range Research Station in Woodward, Oklahoma.

For seed or plant increase: Four classes of seed (Breeder, Foundation, Registered, and Certified) are recognized for Ahring little bluestem. Breeder and Foundation seeds will be produced and maintained by USDA-ARS, Southern Plains Range Research Station, Woodward, Oklahoma; and certified seed production will be limited to USDA Hardiness Zone 6 or 7.

Citation

Release Brochure for ‘Ahring’ little bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash]. 2021. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, James E. “Bud” Smith Plant Materials Center. Knox City, Texas.

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 website <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program website <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

For more information, contact:
USDA-ARS Southern Plains Research Station
2000 18th Street
Woodward, Oklahoma 73801
Phone: 580.256.7449
<https://www.ars.usda.gov/plains-area/sprrs/rangeland-and-pasture-research/>

or

USDA-NRCS James E. “Bud” Smith Plant Materials Center
3950 FM 1292, Suite 100
Knox City, Texas 79529
Phone: 940.658.3922 ext. 5
<https://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/txpmc/>



Helping People Help The Land

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LENDER