

## Central Wet-Mesic Tallgrass Prairie

**Site Characteristics:** Stands typically occur in narrow draws of headwaters of small streams, depressions of terraces (sometimes uplands), and on shallow depressions within floodplains of larger streams and rivers. Some stands occur on sandy outwash plains, lakeplains, and shallow swales. The sites are typically level to gently sloping. The soils are sands, loamy sands, silt loams and sandy loams. Some are found on clay loams or silty clays. The loamy soils are somewhat poorly drained and deep (100 cm or more). They have deep, acidic, dark A horizons which are high in organic matter. There is faint evidence of gleying immediately beneath the A horizon. The parent material is typically alluvium, although in headwater draws, loess, glacial till, or deeply weathered rock are likely to be the parent material. Standing surface water may be present for short periods in the winter and spring or after heavy rains. Stands are found on soils that are imperfectly or somewhat imperfectly drained. The soils often have a slowly permeable layer within the profile, a high water table, additions of moisture through seepage, or a combination of several of these conditions.

**Vegetation Characteristics:** This community is an extensive grassland with a tree canopy of less than 10% occurring as scattered individuals or clumps. There is a single layer of dominant graminoids intermixed with abundant forbs (min. 60% cover). Big Bluestem and Prairie Cordgrass are dominant species exceeding 2 m in height in this wet-mesic community. Switchgrass is usually somewhat shorter but still greater than 1 m tall. Other typical plants found in this community are Inland Rush, Gama Grass, Saw-tooth Sunflower, Common cinquefoil, Rattlesnake Master, Bicknell's Sedge, and Canada Bluejoint. Little Bluestem can be found on sites subject to seasonal drought. Species diversity does not tend to be as high as in more mesic grassland communities.

**Range:**

**Conservation Status:** G2 – Imperiled (S1)

**Management Considerations:** This community has nearly been eliminated because of conversion to cropland. Fire plays a role in the maintenance of this wet-mesic prairie, with an average fire frequency of every two to five years. Woody species can become more abundant in the absence of fire.



### Iowa NRCS Plant Community Description

This community description is a compilation of the Community Association and its over-riding Community Alliance description as provided by NatureServe ([www.natureserve.org/explorer](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer)). Where necessary, community descriptions were adapted as recommended by Iowa plant community experts.

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## Central Wet-mesic Tallgrass Prairie Species List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Strata	Functional Group	IA C of C	Seeds/Lb	State Status
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Big bluestem	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-Grass, Warm Season	4	160,000	
<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>	Bluejoint	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Cool Season	5	4,480,000	
<i>Carex bicknellii</i>	Bicknell's sedge	Herbaceous Layer	P-Sedge, Cool Season	10	272,000	
<i>Carex spp.</i>	True Sedges	Herbaceous Layer	Sedge, Cool Season			
<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	Canada wild rye	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Cool Season	5	83,200	
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	Rattlesnake master	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	8	120,000	
<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	Saw-tooth sunflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	240,000	
<i>Hypericum mutilum</i>	Dwarf St. Johnswort	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	7		
<i>Juncus interior</i>	Inland rush	Herbaceous Layer	P-Sedge, Cool Season	2	44,800,000	
<i>Liatris pycnostachya</i>	Prairie blazing star	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	6	176,000	
<i>Lysimachia quadriflora</i>	Narrow-leaved loosestrife	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	7	1,440,000	
<i>Oenothera pilosella</i>	Prairie sundrops	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	7	4,256,000	
<i>Packera paupercula</i>	Prairie ragwort	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	5		
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Switchgrass	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Warm Season	5	224,000	
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>	Western wheatgrass	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Cool Season	2	115,008	
<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>	Foxglove Penstemon	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	2,080,000	
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	False dragonhead	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	6	176,000	
<i>Potentilla simplex</i>	Common cinquefoil	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	3		
<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>	Common mountain mint	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	3,520,000	
<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	Long-headed coneflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	320,000	
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	Gray-headed coneflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	672,000	
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Little bluestem	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Warm Season	5	240,000	
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	Indian grass	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Warm Season	4	192,000	
<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	Slough grass, cord grass	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-Grass, Warm Season	4	105,600	
<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i>	Purple meadow-rue	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	4	176,000	
<i>Tripsacum dactyloides</i>	Gama grass	Herbaceous Layer	P-Grass, Warm Season	3	5,920	
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's root	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	5	12,800,000	
<i>Zizia aurea</i>	Golden Alexander's	Herbaceous Layer	P-Forb	6	176,000	

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