

Grasses: 30 Special Features and Uses

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GRASSES FOR WILDLIFE

Larval food for native butterflies:

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
lake sedge, *Carex lacustris*
tussock sedge, *Carex stricta*
river oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
June grass, *Koeleria macrantha*
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*



skipper butterfly on ribbon grass

Seeds songbirds and wild turkeys love:

sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
blue fescue, *Festuca 'Elijah Blue'*
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans*
prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*



blue grama

Cover for wildlife:

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
lake sedge, *Carex lacustris*
tussock sedge, *Carex stricta*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
June grass, *Koeleria macrantha*
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*
prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*



sparrow nest in native grass

COLORFUL GRASSES

Fall Color

fall blooming reedgrass, *Calamagrostis brachytricha*
red flame miscanthus, *Miscanthus 'Purpurescens'*
tall moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea*
'Cordoba', 'Skyracer', 'Transparent', 'Windspiel'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Prairie Fire'
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* Blue Heaven®
prairie cordgrass, *Spartina pectinata*
prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*



Fall color Minnesota Landscape Arboretum Grass Collection

Blue Foliage

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* 'Lord Snowden'
carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
blue fescue, *Festuca* 'Beyond Blue', 'Cool as Ice',
'Elijah Blue'
blue oat grass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
blue lymegrass, *Leymus arenarius*
switchgrass, *Panicum amarum* 'Dewey Blue'



'Cool as Ice' blue fescue



yellow hakone grass in the midst of red flowers

Yellow Foliage

feather reedgrass, *Calamagrostis xacutiflora* 'Art's Gold', 'El Dorado'
Bowles's Golden sedge, *Carex elata* 'Aurea'
broad-leafed sedge, *Carex siderosticha* 'Banana Boat'
hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aurea', 'All Gold'
golden wood millet, *Millium effusum* 'Aureum'
variegated moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata'



Bowles's golden sedge

Purple foliage

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* 'Blackhawks', 'Red October'

switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Hot Rod', 'Ruby Ribbons', 'Prairie Fire', 'Cheyenne Sky', 'Shenandoah'

purple millet, *Pennisetum* spp. 'Prince', 'Princess', 'Princess Caroline', 'Princess Molly', 'Purple Majesty', 'Vertigo' (annuals)

little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Smoke Signal'



'Lord Snowden' left and 'Red October' right, big bluestem



Switchgrass "Prairie Fire"

Striped foliage

feather reedgrass, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Overdam' and 'Avalanche'

Japanese sedge, *Carex* 'Ice Dance'

striped sedge, *Carex* 'Silver Scepter'

broadleaf sedge, *Carex siderosticha* 'Variegata'

hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* 'Albo-striata'

Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Rigoletto', 'Silberfeil', 'Variegatus'

Winter Interest

Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silver Feather', 'Purpurescens'

tall moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Cordoba', 'Skyracer', 'Transparent', 'Windspiel'

switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Cheyenne Sky', 'Northwind', 'Prairie Fire', 'Thundercloud'

little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*

Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans*



broad-leafed sedge, right; palm sedge left



switchgrass in the winter

GRASSES FOR SPECIFIC SITES

Front of border

Bowles' golden sedge, *Carex elata* 'Aurea'
Bunny Blue sedge, *Carex laxiculmis* 'Bunny Blue'
Oehme palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis* 'Oehme'
broadleaf sedge, *Carex siderosticha* 'Variegata'
blue fescue, *Festuca* 'Beyond Blue', Cool as Ice',
'Elijah Blue'
hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aurea'
variegated moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata'
prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis* 'Tara'



'Skyrocket' *Pennisetum*



hakone grass

Containers

feather reedgrass, *Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora*
'Avalanche', 'Overdam'
'Banana Boat' sedge, *Carex siderosticha* 'Banana Boat'
sedges, *Carex* 'Red Rooster', 'Toffee Twist' (annuals)
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis* 'Little Midge', 'Oehme'
blue fescue, *Festuca glauca* 'Beyond Blue', Cool as Ice',
'Elijah Blue'
hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* and cultivars
blue oatgrass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus'
purple fountaingrass, *Pennisetum advena* 'Cherry Sparkler', 'Fireworks', 'Sky Rocket'
purple millet, *Pennisetum* hybrids
'Prince', 'Princess Caroline', 'Princess Molly', 'Purple Majesty', 'Vertigo' (annuals)
oriental fountaingrass, *Pennisetum orientale*
Mexican needle grass, *Nassella tenuissima*

Dry soil

sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
blue fescue, *Festuca glauca* 'Beyond Blue', Cool as Ice',
'Elijah Blue'
blue oatgrass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
June grass, *Koeleria macrantha*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*

Heavy clay soil

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
blue lymegrass, *Leymus arenarius* 'Blue Dunes'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans*



Indian grass

Wet sites

palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
lake sedge, *Carex lacustris*
river oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
American mannagrass, *Glyceria grandis*
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
prairie cordgrass, *Spartina pectinata*



river oats

Alkaline Soils

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
plains oval sedge, *Carex brevior*
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans*



bluejoint

Lakeshores, can tolerate changes in water level and standing water

bluejoint, *Calamagrostis canadensis*
bottlebrush sedge, *Carex comosa*
mace sedge, *Carex grayi*
lake sedge, *Carex lacustris*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
tussock sedge, *Carex stricta*
American mannagrass, *Glyceria grandis*
prairie cordgrass, *Spartina pectinata*

Salt tolerant

sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*

Light shade

porcupine sedge, *Carex hystericina*
Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pennsylvanica*
river oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
tufted hairgrass, *Deschampsia caespitosa*
eastern bottlebrush, *Elymus hystrix* var. *hystrix*
hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* & cultivars
woodrush, *Luzula* species
golden wood millet, *Milium effusum* 'Aureum'



bottlebrush grass

Heavy shade

carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
long-stalked sedge, *Carex pedunculata*
Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pennsylvanica*
river oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
tufted hairgrass, *Deschampsia caespitosa*
woodrush, *Luzula sylvatica*



tufted hairgrass

Dry shade: under maple, box elder or spruce trees

- carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
- Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pensylvanica*
- Eastern star sedge, *Carex radiata*
- blue fescue, *Festuca glauca* 'Beyond Blue', 'Cool as Ice', 'Elijah Blue'
- blue oatgrass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
- June grass, *Koeleria macrantha*



Pennsylvania sedge

Slopes/steep banks, these grasses have creeping rhizomes

- carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
- black flowered sedge, *Carex nigra* 'Variegata'
- Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pensylvanica*
- blue lymegrass, *Leymus arenarius*
- ribbon grass, *Phalaris arundinacea* 'Strawberries and Cream'

Ground cover

- Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pensylvanica*
- eastern star sedge, *Carex radiata*
- carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
- black-flowered sedge, *Carex nigra* 'Variegata'
- blue fescue, *Festuca* 'Beyond Blue', 'Cool as Ice', 'Elijah Blue'
- hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra*
- sweet grass, *Hierochloa odorata*



Pennsylvania sedge

Berms: septic and more

- sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
- blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
- plains oval sedge, *Carex brevior*
- blue fescue, *Festuca* 'Beyond Blue', 'Cool as Ice', 'Elijah Blue'
- blue oatgrass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
- June grass, *Koeleria macrantha*
- little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
- prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*



carnation sedge

Screen or hedge

3-4 feet tall

feather reedgrass, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Overdam'
fall blooming reedgrass, *Calamagrostis brachytricha*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
purple moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* 'Moorhexe'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Cape Breeze',
'Cheyenne Sky', 'Prairie Fire'
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* Blue Heaven®

5 feet tall

Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Klein
Fontaene'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Badlands',
'Shenandoah'
silver spikegrass, *Spodiopogon sibiricus*

5-7 feet tall

Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Blondo',
'Silver Feather', 'Strictus', 'Zebrinus'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
'Cloud 9', 'Northwind', 'Thundercloud'
Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans* 'Sioux Blue'

See-through screen or hedge, 5-7 feet

tall moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea*
'Cordoba', 'Skyracer', 'Transparent', 'Windspiel'

Windbreaks

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* 'Indian Warrior',
'Red October'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Badlands', 'Northwind',
'Thundercloud', 'Shenandoah'
Indian grass, *Sorghastrum nutans*
silver spikegrass, *Spodiopogon sibiricus*



'Moorhexe' purple moorgrass



'Skyracer' tall moorgrass



silver spikegrass

GRASSES WITH SPECIAL FEATURES

Hardy in USDA Zone 3

big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
feather reedgrass, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' & 'Overdam'
fall blooming reedgrass, *Calamagrostis brachytricha*
tufted hairgrass, *Deschampsia caespitosa*
fescue, *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue'
blue oatgrass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*
red flame miscanthus, *Miscanthus* 'Purpurascens'
Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberfeder'
variegated purple moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata'
tall moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Windspiel'
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
silver spikegrass, *Spodiopogon sibiricus*



Crookston, Minnesota grass evaluations

Grasses with rhizomes to bind lakeshores or cover tough sites

bluejoint, *Calamagrostis canadensis*
carnation sedge, *Carex flacca*
Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pensylvanica*
American mannagrass, *Glyceria grandis*
sweet grass, *Hierochloa odorata*
blue lymegrass, *Leymus arenarius*
prairie cordgrass, *Spartina pectinata*

Self-seeding grasses

mace sedge, *Carex grayi*
porcupine sedge, *Carex hystericina*
palm sedge, *Carex muskingumensis*
long-beaked sedge, *Carex sprengei*
river oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
love grass, *Eragrostis curvula* 'Wind Dancer'
blue fescue, *Festuca* species
Siberian melic grass, *Melica altissima* var. *atropurpurea*
Japanese silvergrass, *Miscanthus sinensis* cultivars

***two or more cultivars grown together cross-pollinate and set seed; plant only where you can monitor seedlings; Miscanthus is considered an invasive plant in eastern and mid-Atlantic states. ***

tall purple moorgrass, *Molinia caerulea* ssp. *arundinacea*

Mexican feathergrass, *Nassella tenuissima* (annual)
panic grass, *Panicum* 'Frosted Explosion' (annual)
switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*
fountaingrass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides*
little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*



mace sedge

For more information about grasses and sedges see:

<http://grasses.cfans.umn.edu> and

<https://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/landscaping/ornamental-grasses-for-cold-climates/>.