

Schizachyrium scoparium - Little Bluestem



Native to open woods, tall grass prairies, fields, clearings and roadsides of the eastern United States and southern Canada, little bluestem was one of the dominant grasses of the tallgrass prairies of central North America. It is a clump-forming, fine-textured, warm season bunchgrass with great seasonal foliage. Growing 2-4 feet tall by 2 feet wide, plants have tufts of blue-green blades that turn

reddish, then bronze-orange after a late autumn frost and, finally, tan in winter. Little bluestem is a good architectural feature in the winter garden. Plants bloom in July and August when purplish-bronze flowers on 3-inch racemes rise above the foliage. Clusters of fluffy, silver seed-heads persist on plants into winter. Little bluestem will self-seed.

Hardy to USDA zone 3 (-40 degrees F), little bluestem grows best in well-drained average to dry soil in sun. Plants are tolerant of heat, drought and a variety of soils but will not do well in wet, acidic, or highly fertile soils or in shade. Divide in spring and cut to the ground in late winter/early spring before new growth begins.

Little bluestem is a good cut flower, tolerates black walnut trees and is deer resistant. It is the larval host for the Leonard's skipper butterfly and attracts songbirds for its seeds. Little bluestem is the state grass of Kansas and Nebraska.