

BROOMSEGE BLUESTEM

Andropogon virginicus L.
plant symbol = ANVI2

Contributed by: USDA, NRCS, Louisiana State Office, National Plant Data Center, & the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative-South Central Region



Grass Images
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Alternative Names

Broomsedge, popotillo, whiskey grass, and yellow bluestem. Some botanists consider *Andropogon glomeratus* and *Andropogon virginicus* as one species. However, the two grasses are distinct and consistent in appearance and are currently recognized as separate species.

Uses

Livestock: Broomsedge bluestem is grazed readily by cattle in the spring and early summer shortly after growth starts. The nutrition value is low except in early stages of growth. It is unpalatable when mature.

Ornamental Landscaping: Broomsedge bluestem is used as an ornament in landscapes. The inflorescence is orange in the fall and remains throughout the winter. It provides color to the landscape.

Wildlife: Broomsedge bluestem benefits wildlife. Several species of birds and mammals eat the seeds in the winter when the seeds of other plants are not available. Several animals use the plants for cover and nesting sites (especially quail).

Erosion Control: Broomsedge bluestem is found on low fertile soils and prevents erosion when other plants can not be found.

Conservation Practices: Broomsedge bluestem, because of its growth habit, potentially has application when established with certain conservation practices; however, conservation practice standards vary by state. For localized information, consult your local NRCS Field Office. NRCS practices include the following: 327-Conservation Cover; 342-Critical Area Planting; 386-Field Border; 390-Riparian Herbaceous Cover; 393-Filter Strip; 512-Pasture and Hay Planting; 550-Range Planting; 560-Access Road; 562-Recreation Area Improvement; 643-Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats; 644-Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management; 647-Early Successional Habitat Development/Management; 656-Constructed Wetland; 657-Wetland Restoration; 658-Wetland Creation; 659-Wetland Enhancement.

Status

Consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Grass Family (Poaceae). It is a native, warm-season, herbaceous, perennial bunch grass that begins its growth when the average daytime temperature is between 60° to 65° F. The slender, erect culms are up to 4 feet tall. The flattened sheaths are overlapping and with a few scattered hairs. The upper part of the plant is rounded and the lower part is slightly flattened and keeled. The blade is 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide, 10 to 16 inches long and rough to the touch above. The ligule is small and membranous. The inflorescence has a panicle of two to four racemes about 1 inch long. The bases of the panicle branches are enclosed in an inflated, tawny

spathe as long or longer than the spikelet. The upper lemma of the sessile spikelet has a straight awn that is ½ inch long. The pedicellate spikelet is absent. The seeds mature in 6 weeks to 2 months.

Distribution

Broomsedge bluestem is found on the edges of forests and disturbed areas throughout the eastern United States. For current distribution, consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Adaptation: Broomsedge bluestem is found in all of Louisiana's Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) except for the Gulf Coast Marsh (151). The USDA Hardiness Zones for broomsedge bluestem is 5 to 10. It grows on a wide variety of soils, especially in old fields and other disturbed sites. It is frequently found with *Andropogon glomeratus* but in higher, better-drained sites. However, broomsedge bluestem might have some allelopathic properties and may cause some other plants to not grow.

Broomsedge bluestem is propagated from seeds or by plant division. However, of the two propagation methods, it is best to plant broomsedge bluestem by seeds. The seeds are produced 6 to 8 weeks from when the culms were produced.

The seeds should be planted in late winter as a dormant seeding or when daily temperatures average in the low 60's. The seed can be broadcast and culm-packed if the right field conditions exist. The seeding rate should be 10 to 12 pure live seed pounds/acre. The seeds should be planted to a depth of ¼ to ¾ inch. If the right field conditions do not exist or intensive seedbed preparation is undesirable, then disk the site and leave the surface as rough as possible. Do not attempt to create a smooth uniform appearance for the seedbed. Broadcast the seed and leave it undisturbed. When seeding under minimal seedbed preparation, increase the seeding rate by 50%.

It is not recommended to mix broomsedge bluestem seeds with cool season grass seeds. In parts of the United States where cool season grasses dominate, the warm season grasses can be taken over because they develop slower than the cool season grasses. It is also recommended that seed should not be moved more than 300 miles north, 100 miles east or west, or 200 miles south of its point of origin.

Management

Broomsedge bluestem does not require fertilizers as the plants can grow in low fertility areas. Overgrazing and frequent haying of broomsedge bluestem results in an increase of this plant. However, if broomsedge bluestem becomes weedy, then burning, plowing, or mowing is recommended. Check with the local extension service for recommended herbicides. Broomsedge bluestem has no known pests or problems.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials or contact your local NRCS Field Office. Common seed is readily available from a number of growers, wholesalers, and retailers of native plants.

References

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Prepared By

Selena Dawn Newman

USDA, NRCS, Louisiana Plant Materials Program

Maraya Gates

USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center

Species Coordinator

Mike Materne

USDA, NRCS, Louisiana State Office

c/o Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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