

Native Bunch Grasses For Landscaping

Native grasses can be used as specimen plants - as you would any flower or shrub, they can be mixed in with wildflowers to produce a prairie effect, and they can be used in mass plantings to produce stunning swatches of seasonal color in your landscape. They are quite versatile, because they will grow in a wide range of light, soil, and moisture conditions. Once established they need little or no care.

Grasses used in the landscape not only provide differences in texture and height, but also provide food, forage area, shelter, and nest material for wildlife. Birds eat the seeds, forage for insects within the clumps, and use the foliage for nesting materials and shelter. Nymphs and satyr butterflies use many of the native grasses as larval food plants.

***Andropogon capillipes*, Chalky bluestem.** The foliage is a bluish green. Mature plants are approximately 12 inches in diameter and are generally small unless in bloom. The flower stalks appear in late summer and reach 3 to 5 feet in height. The flower is silvery white. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, sandy to slightly organic soil, and a range of moisture from well drained to seasonally moist.

***Aristida stricta* (syn. *A. beyrichiana*), Wiregrass.** The foliage is gray green with a wiry appearance. Mature plants are approximately 1½ feet wide by 2 feet tall. The flower stalk is generally 18 inches in height, but may reach 3 feet. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, sandy soil, and a range of moisture from well drained to seasonally wet. If it is burned in late spring you will be rewarded in the fall with 2 to 4 foot tall golden seed stalks. Burning can be done on an individual plant basis.

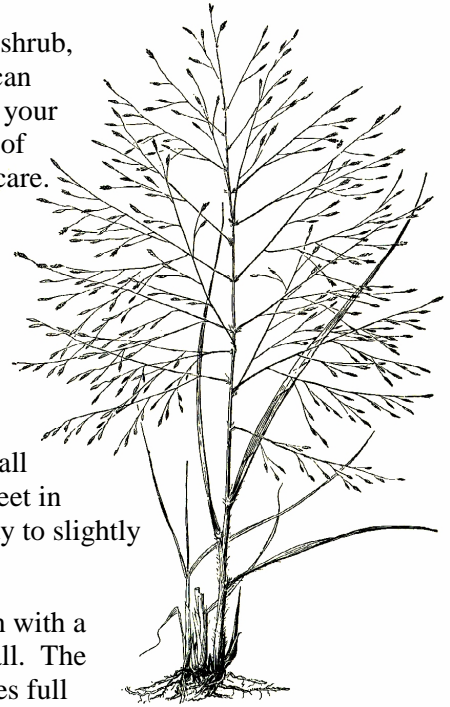
***Eragrostis spectabilis*, Purple lovegrass.** The foliage is bright green. Mature plants are approximately 1½ feet wide by 1½ tall. The flower is fine-textured and purple. It appears in early summer. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, and dry to moist, sandy to organic soils.

***Muhlenbergia capillaris*, Muhly grass.** The foliage is thin and wiry with a needle like appearance. Mature plants are approximately 3 feet wide by 3 feet tall. The fine-textured, maroon-pink flowers are on 20-inch long stalks. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, dry to moist, sandy to slightly organic soils.

***Sorghastrum secundum*, Lopsided Indiangrass.** The foliage is less dense than the other grasses. However, the flower seeds make up for the loss in foliage. The 4 to 6 foot flower stalks appear in late summer and are easily recognized by the seed, with its maroon and blond hairs, which hangs on one side of the arching stem. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, and dry to moist, sandy to slightly organic soils.

***Spartina bakeri*, Sand cordgrass.** The foliage has a fine-textured appearance. Mature plants can reach a size of 3 feet wide by 5 feet tall. The flower stalks reach 3 to 6 feet in height. The blooms are not as showy as some of the other grasses. Seed forms in early summer. It tolerates full sun to filtered sun, dry to moist, sandy to slightly organic soils.

***Tripsacum dactyloides*, Gamagrass.** The foliage is a deep green and sword-like giving the plant a thick, bushy appearance. Mature plants reach a size of 4 feet wide by 4 feet tall. Its large size makes it a good specimen plant, and a good alternative to pampas grass. The flower stalks appear in early summer and are not very showy. The flower stalk may reach 6 feet in height. It requires full sun to filtered sun, average to moist, sandy to organic soil.



by Sharon LaPlante