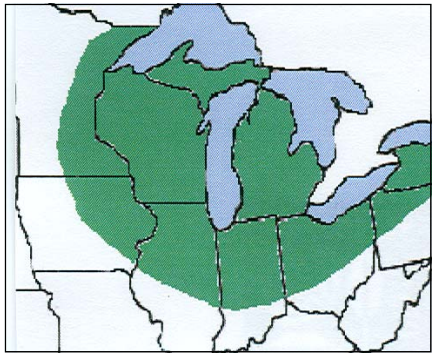
Anticipated Area of Adaptation

This specifies is found in dry to moist open areas throughout much of the United States, and is a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies. Its primary utilization area is expected to be within the Great Lakes region.



Availability of Plant Materials

Seed/plant stock of Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem will be maintained cooperatively by the USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and made available to commercials growers.

To request seed/plant stock or further information contact the Plant Materials Specialist at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center.

For More Information

Visit our Plant Materials website at

http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov to find more information on using plants to solve conservation problems.

USDA-NRCS

Rose Lake Plant Materials Center

7472 Stoll Road

East Lansing, MI 48823

Phone (517) 641-6300

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Plant Materials Specialist

(517) 641-7831

Plant Solutions for Conservation Needs

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United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plant Materials Program

Southlow Michigan Germplasm Big Bluestem

A source-identified conservation plant

Released by the

Rose Lake Plant Materials Center

East Lansing, Michigan

Southlow Michigan germplasm big bluestem

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD), and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) announce the release of a source identified ecotype of big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii* Vitman) for the Great Lakes region.

As a source identified release, this plant will be referred to as **Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem** to document its original collection location in the southern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem is released as a source identified type of certified seed (natural track). It is a composite release that has been assigned the NRCS accession number 9084510.

This alternative release procedure is justified because sources and supplies of Michigan ecotype big bluestem are very limited and unable to meet the demand for this product. Propagation material of this ecotype is needed for ecosystem restoration and enhancement. The potential for immediate use is extremely high.

Collection Site

Seed was collected from native stands (as designated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division) of big bluestem within the southern half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Ecotype Description

Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem is a composite of several big bluestem collections and has features consistent with the species. It is a perennial, warm season bunch grass with short, scaly rhizomes. Stems are erect, pithy, and can reach a height of eight feet. It is very leafy at the base, lessening considerably up the stem. Leaf blades have long, silky hairs that are widely dispersed on the upper surface. Plants bear two to six racemes at the top of the culms, and usually some smaller inflorescences from the leaf axils.

Ecological Considerations and Evaluation

This big bluestem is a native Michigan plant material that has undergone no purposeful selection; therefore it should not differ in rate of spread, seed production, vigor, nor behavior from naturally occurring big bluestem in this area. Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem has been through all required environmental evaluations.

Anticipated Conservation Use

The anticipated uses of Southlow Michigan Germplasm big bluestem include providing food/cover for wildlife, increasing species diversity, controlling erosion, and restoring native plant environments. Big bluestem provides seeds and possible habitat for insects, both of which are used as food sources by songbirds, game birds, and small mammals. Many wildlife species also utilize big bluestem for nesting, escape, and winter cover. As this is a native plant species and composite, it will be useful as a component in the restoration and diversification of native habitat, particularly Southern Michigan, its source of origin. Big bluestem may also be useful in combination with other warm and cool season grasses for erosion control because of its massive root system.