

Native Grass Identification



Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)

Quick ID: Turkey foot seedhead, long hairs on leaf blade toward base

Big bluestem is a 4-7' tall, leafy, warm-season bunch grass with fine hairs where the leaf joins the stem. On mature plants, the seed head has two or three spikes or fingers that attach at a common joint of the stalk, resembling a turkey foot. On young leaves, big bluestem can be identified by the long hairs near the leaf base.



Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)

Quick ID: "rifle sight" ligule, plume-like seed head

Indiangrass is 4-7' tall warm season bunch grass with a graceful, fountain-like habit. A distinguishing trait for this grass is the "rifle- sight" where the leaf blade connects with the stem. The leaf blade becomes very narrow where it attaches to the stem. Mature seed heads open and become a light rust color and similar to sorghum, a distinctive plume. The leaves are rough to touch and turn yellow in the fall.



Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Quick ID: Open panicle seedhead without hairs, triangle of hairs at base of leaf blade

Switchgrass grows to 4-7' in bunches, but can form a sod. Identified by the patch of white hairs in the area where the leaf blade connects to the rest of the plant. It has a distinctive, open, widely branched seed head when mature.



Purpletop (*Tridens flavus*)

Quick ID: Purple seedhead and relatively wide leaves that have a very small ligule that is a fringe of hairs.

Perennial, bunching warm-season grass 4-5' tall. Dark purple panicles with a greasy feel. Leaves are usually hairy except near the bases and are somewhat flattened and appear folded in the sheath, with a relatively prominent white midvein.



Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Quick ID: Oat-like seeds all on one side, leaf margins with hairs or white bumps

The prostrate habit of this warm-season native bunchgrass is distinctive. It grows in a swirl that when in seed can grow to 2 feet tall. The color of the grass is bluish-green and cures to a reddish-brown color in the fall. The leaves are fairly coarse and stiff. Blooms occur along one side of the seed stalk and are bright red in color. The mature seeds droop from this one edge, thus attributing to the name.



Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Quick ID: Growing in tight bunch, stem base is flat, leaves folded at bottom

Very common, native, warm-season grass about 2' tall. It is a clump forming grass that will produce a fairly dense sod if left undisturbed. At maturity, little bluestem is reddish in color with a blue tint.



Broomsedge bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus*)

Very similar to little bluestem except that broomsedge shoots are yellowish in color and at maturity Broomsedge is golden, not reddish.



Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Quick ID: Clump, with long, narrow basal leaves only and smells like burnt popcorn when in bloom

An erect, densely tufted perennial 1-3 feet tall with many oppositely arranged scaly straw colored basal leaves. This grass forms distinctive, extremely dense tussocks. When mature, the seeds are large, round, and black, unlike any other grass in Ohio.



Canada wildrye (*Elymus canadensis*)

Quick ID: Drooping seedhead with long awns, large clasping auricles.

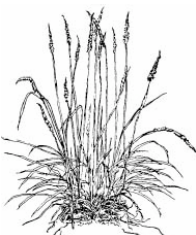
Robust, native cool-season bunchgrass that reaches 3-5' in height and is bluish-green in color. The blade is soft to the touch and light lime-green in the early spring. The nodding, soft seed head is similar to rye. Adapted to many soil types, especially sands.



Virginia wildrye (*Elymus virginicus*)

Quick ID: Similar to Canada wildrye, but its seedhead is upright

This bunch grass has stiff and upright leaves that are dark green. The seed head is upright, smaller with densely packed seeds and the awns are stiff. Tolerates moist soil and shade.



Prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*)

Quick ID: Short, tightly bunched growth, spike-like seedhead, blunt membrane

This short cool-season upland bunch grass has a tufted appearance. The grass forms a mat and is very attractive. It remains green even in drought and prefers well-drained dry soil.