

Grasses of the Great Plains: A Pictorial Guide

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by: Chuck R. Coffey
Russell L. Stevens

NF-FO-12-01

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THE SAMUEL ROBERTS
NOBLE
FOUNDATION
Agricultural Division

*Grasses of the Great Plains:
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The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc.
Agricultural Division
2510 Sam Noble Parkway
Ardmore, Oklahoma 73401

CIP Publisher Data

Coffey, Chuck R. and Stevens, Russell L.
Grasses of Southern Oklahoma and North Texas: A Pictorial Guide
Ardmore, Oklahoma, Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc.
viii, 120p., includes 464 color photographs, tables of contents, and index
1. Grasses – Southwestern States – Identification 2. Poaceae (Gramineae) – Southwestern States –
Identification 3. Grasses – Oklahoma – Identification 4. Grasses – Texas - Identification I. Title
QK495.G74.C674.2004

ISBN 0-9754303-0-0

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Printed in the United States of America

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Map of the Great Plains



Introduction

Although encountered almost every day, grasses are scarcely noticed in our day-to-day routines. The possible exceptions are grasses used for forage production and landscaping around buildings. Most people have no idea of the types of grasses that exist in the field. For the casual observer, identification of different grasses is probably not all that important. But for the person trying to produce yields from the land, manage wildlife habitat or provide assistance to producers, knowledge and identification of grasses is extremely important.

Grasses are vital to the existence of mankind. Cereal grains such as wheat, corn and rice are directly consumed by humans, and many other grasses are essential for the production of meat and fiber for human consumption and use. Grasses are also an essential component of wildlife habitat for many species of mammals, birds and reptiles. Grasses help protect and build soil on our pastures and rangelands through the production and decomposition of roots, runners, leaves and stems. Healthy grasslands also play a key role in collecting clean, abundant water for aquifers and reservoirs.

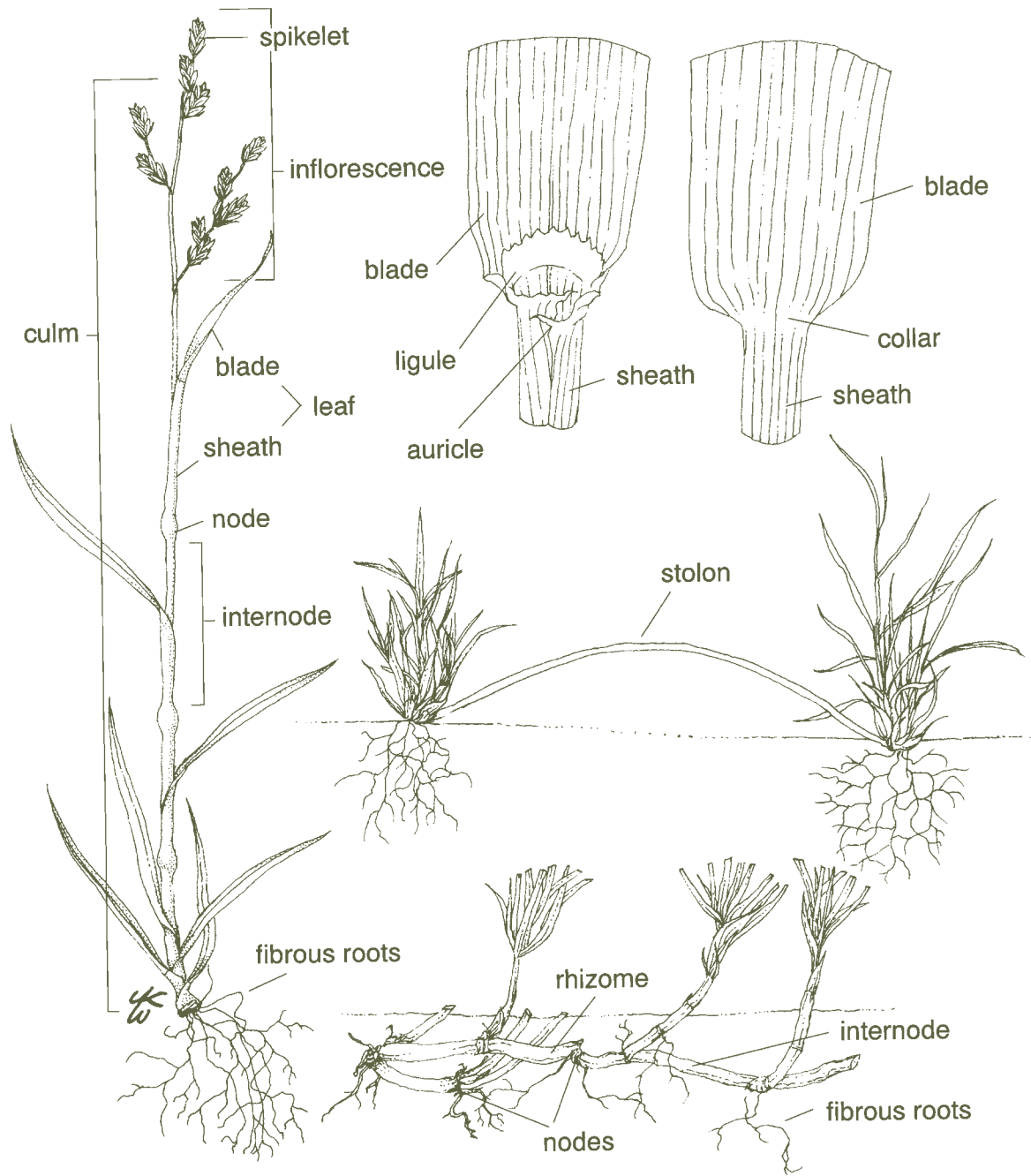
The Great Plains are the historical home of the North American bison, pronghorn antelope and a plethora of other mammals, birds and reptiles. Today, many of these same animals use grasses to support daily dietary needs while others use them for shade, cover or nesting. Grasses are flowering plants belonging to the Poaceae (Graminae) family. According to *Flora of the Great Plains* (McGregor, et al. 1986), there are over 250 species of grasses from 75 different genera occurring in the Great Plains. This book represents 116 of these grasses. They are organized alphabetically by tribe, genus and species. Many of the grasses in this book occur throughout the Great Plains while others occur only regionally. Some of the more common species in the northern and western extremes of the Plains are not found in

this book as our focus was the central and Southern Great Plains.

Stems, roots, leaves and inflorescences containing small flowers borne in specialized structures called spikelets are the basic structures of grass plants (Figure 1, p. vi). The intent of this book is to provide users with photographs of these and other grass parts as an aid to their identification. For each grass, photographs of the entire plant and any identifiable characteristics, when appropriate, are included with the family, tribe, genus, species, common name, origin, longevity and season of growth, as well as a short description of the plant and its uses. Nomenclature used in the *Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas* (Diggs, et. al. 1999) was followed when applicable and that of *Vascular Plants of Texas* (Jones, et. al. 1997) when not. For tribal associations, *Grass Systematics, Second Edition* (Gould & Shaw 1983) was used. For origin, longevity and season of growth, we followed the *Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Texas* (Hatch, et. al. 1990).

Technical information about grass identification can be obtained from plant keys and other available resources. Consulting these is essential for positive identification. Some useful reference materials are listed on page 117. This book is not intended to provide the definitive answer to the identification of a grass even though the authors are confident that the photographs in this book accurately represent each grass presented. However, there is no assurance the grass a user is attempting to identify is represented in this book. The photographs that follow will provide farmers, ranchers, wildlife enthusiasts and other landowners with a means to easily and more accurately identify grasses common to the Great Plains region. Biologists, botanists, other professionals and students should find it a handy reference as well.

Figure 1. The Grass Plant



(Hatch et. al. 1999)

List of Grasses

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GRASSES

Big bluestem

Species: *Andropogon gerardii*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 1-2 m
Flowers: Aug-Nov



The state grass of Illinois and Missouri. A tallgrass of the True Prairie (considered one of the “big four” grasses) which occurs on various soil types and is preferred by livestock. The base of the plant is typically hairy, and the inflorescence often resembles a turkey foot. It can provide screening and nesting cover for some wildlife species.



Bushy bluestem

Species: *Andropogon glomeratus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 75-150 cm
Flowers: Sep-Nov

Typically occurs in low-lying wet areas of the Southern Plains. It is very similar in appearance to Broomsedge bluestem, but with a more “bushy” inflorescence. It provides screening and nesting cover for some species of wildlife, is a poor quality forage for cattle and is often used as an ornamental grass in landscapes.

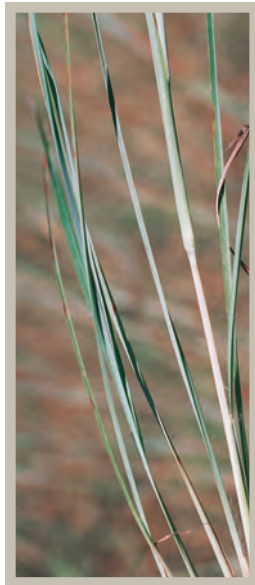


Splitbeard bluestem



Species: *Andropogon ternarius*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Sep-Nov

Typically occurs in upland sites on sandy soils and is very similar in appearance to little bluestem, but with a split inflorescence. Most common in the Southeastern Plains. The basal leaves curl at maturity, and young sheaths have a maroon color. The inflorescence is split, usually forming a “V.” It provides nesting cover for some wildlife species. It is a poor forage for cattle.



Broomsedge bluestem

Species: *Andropogon virginicus*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Andropogoneae

Longevity: Perennial

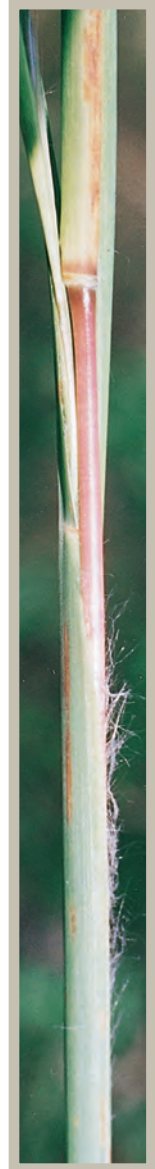
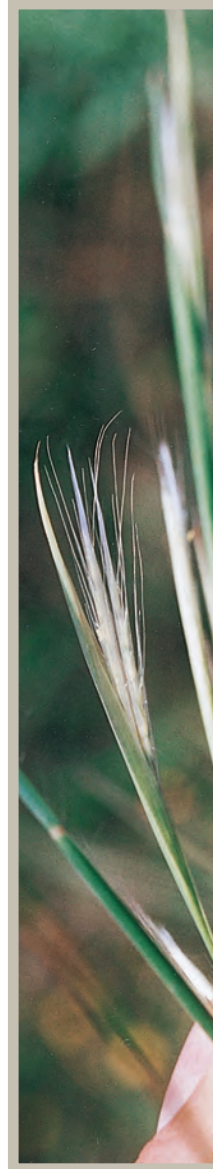
Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 50-100 cm

Flowers: Sep-Nov

Typically occurs on infertile, moist soils and is a common grass of go-back lands of the Eastern Plains. Similar in appearance to little bluestem, but with a split inflorescence and a more straw-colored appearance when dormant. It provides screening and nesting cover for some wildlife species. It is a poor to fair forage for cattle.



Plains bluestem



Species: *Bothriochloa ischaemum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-50 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Has a high production potential under proper management in the Southern Plains. It is typically planted in heavier textured soils as a livestock forage and for hay. It is of little value to most wildlife species and sometimes invasive in native grasslands.



Silver bluestem

Species: *Bothriochloa laguroides*
Synonym: *Bothriochloa saccharoides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 60-130 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

Typically occurs on dry upland sites of the Southern Plains and often indicates declining or improving range condition. The inflorescence is conspicuously hairy. It is of little value to most wildlife species, but may provide cover for some. It provides fair forage for cattle.



Carolina joint-tail



Species: *Coelorachis cylindrica*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-100 cm
Flowers: May-Jul

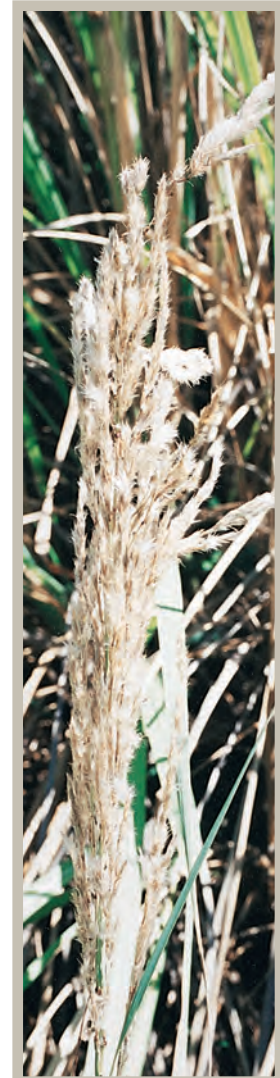
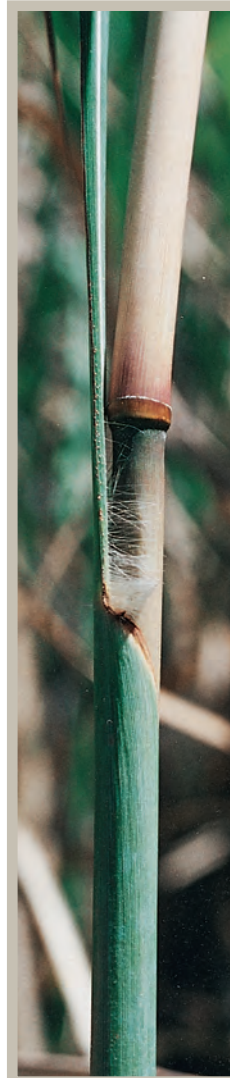
Frequently found on upland prairie sites of the Southeastern Plains, but typically not abundant. The inflorescence resembles a tail and easily breaks apart at the joints when mature. It is of fair value as forage for some wildlife species and cattle in late winter and early spring.



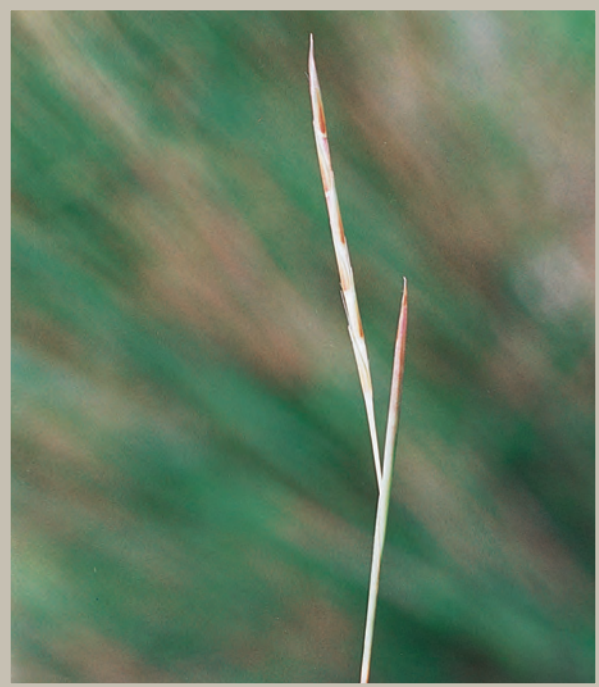
Plumegrass

Species: *Saccharum ravennae*
Synonym: *Eriathus ravennae*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: Up to 3 m
Flowers: Sep-Nov

Occurs in lowland sites along rivers and streams, and can grow to over 10 feet tall. It is often grown as an ornamental. The inflorescence is conspicuously hairy as are the leaf blades near the collar.

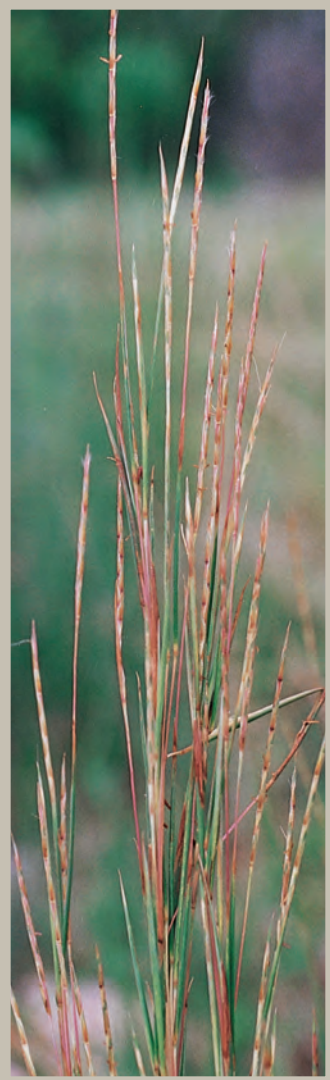


Little bluestem



Species: *Schizachyrium scoparium*
Synonym: *Andropogon scoparius*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-200 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

The state grass of Kansas and Nebraska. It is the dominant forage of the True Prairie and considered one of the “big four” grasses. The leaves often have a blue-green appearance, and the stems are flattened, especially near the base of the plant. It has a single inflorescence, which emerges from a slightly inflated leaf. It provides screening and nesting cover for some wildlife species and good forage for cattle. It is used as an ornamental in some landscapes.



Indiangrass

Species: *Sorghastrum nutans*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 100-200 cm
Flowers: Sep-Nov

The state grass of Oklahoma. It is a tallgrass of the True Prairie and one of the “big four” grasses. It provides good forage for livestock. The leaves are broad with a blue-green color, and the ligules take on the appearance of rabbit ears, which makes it easy to identify vegetatively. It provides screening cover for some wildlife species.



Johnsongrass



Species: *Sorghum halepense*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 100-200 cm
Flowers: Mar-Nov

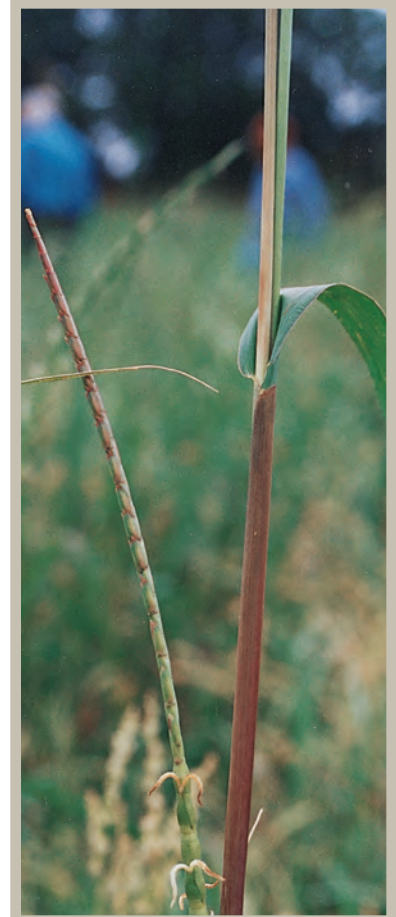
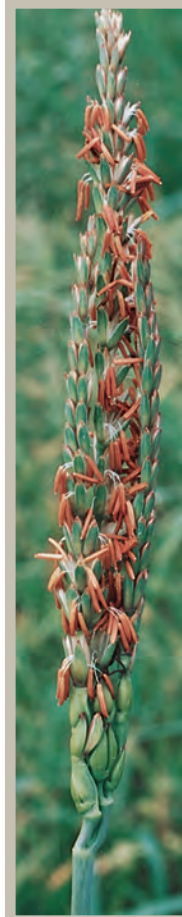
Typically occurs along roadsides and is a pest in croplands. It is preferred by livestock, but can sometimes cause prussic acid or nitrate poisoning. Its leaves and stems are typically speckled with purple blotches. Leaves have a pronounced “white” venation in the center. It provides screening cover and seed value to some wildlife species.



Eastern gamagrass

Species: *Tripsacum dactyloides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Andropogoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 1-2 m
Flowers: Apr-Nov

A tallgrass of the True Prairie mostly found in undisturbed sites of the Southern Plains. It is palatable to livestock and cannot withstand overgrazing. Closely related to corn, it has broad leaves and an inflorescence with male flowers occurring above the female flowers. It provides screening cover for some wildlife species.



Curly threeawn



Species: *Aristida desmantha*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aristideae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 45-100 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

More common in the southeastern portion of the Plains. It often occurs in disturbed, open woodlands. It provides poor forage for cattle and is of little value to most wildlife species. It can be identified by curly awns.

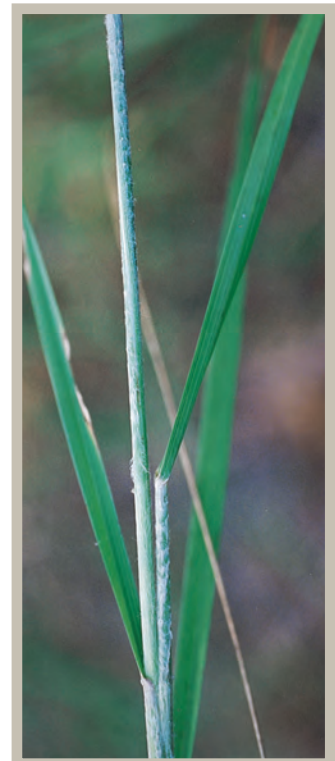
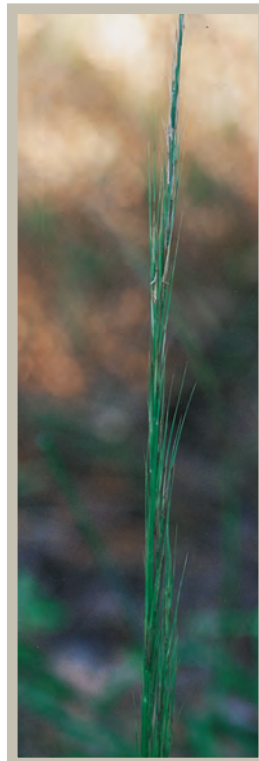


Woollysheath threawn

Species: *Aristida lanosa*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aristideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 75-150 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov



More common in the Southeastern portion of the Plains. It occurs in open woodlands. Its leaf sheaths are densely pubescent, almost woolly in appearance. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



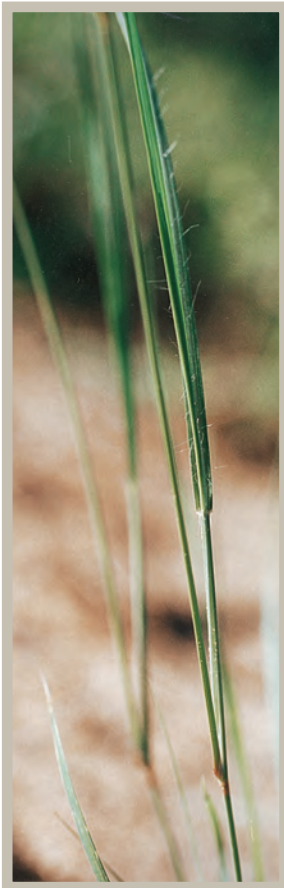
Oldfield threeawn



Species: *Aristida oligantha*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aristideae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 15-50 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov



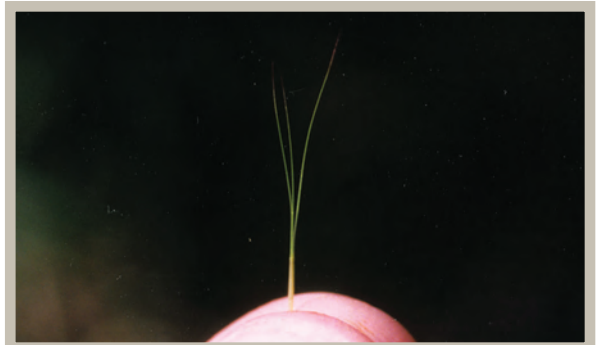
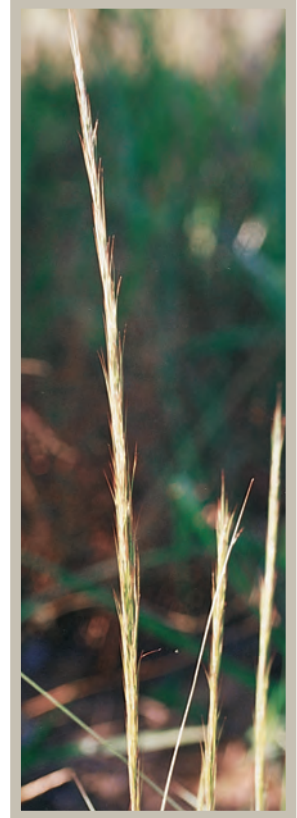
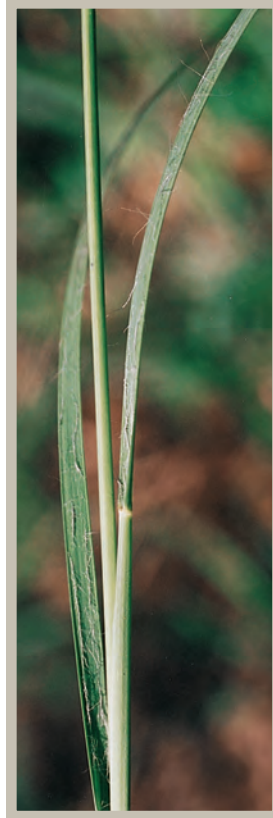
An abundant and weedy grass common in disturbed sites and go-back rangeland. Its glumes are nearly equal in length. Its forage is of little value to wildlife or cattle. Its presence is an indicator of poorly managed pastures.



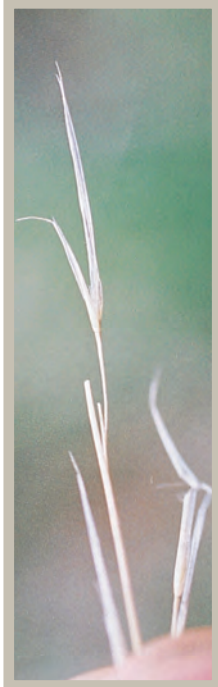
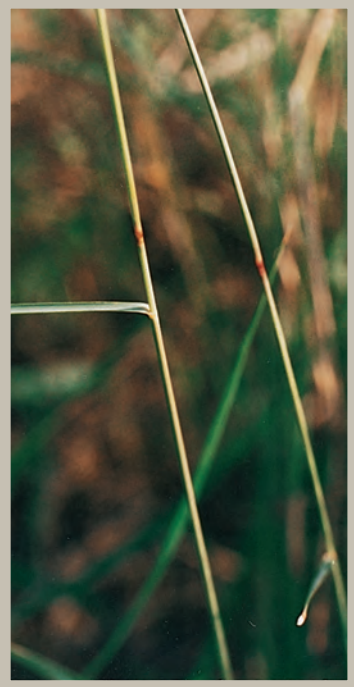
Arrowfeather threawn

Species: *Aristida purpurascens*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aristideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 35-80 cm
Flowers: Sep-Nov

Typically occurs in open woodlands of the Eastern Plains. Its inflorescence is somewhat narrowed and contracted compared to most of our other species of threawn. It is not a desirable grass for wildlife or cattle.



Purple threeawn



Species: *Aristida purpurea*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aristideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 35-80 cm
Flowers: May-Oct

Common along roadsides and occurs on a variety of soil types in the Southern Plains. It is similar in appearance to oldfield threeawn, but the stems do not branch and the glumes are obviously unequal in length. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle. However, cattle may graze it early in the growing season. Its forage quantity is limited.



Giantreed

Species: *Arundo donax*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Arundineae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 2-6 m
Flowers: Sep-Nov

Commonly seen in ditches along roadsides. It can grow to 20 feet in height and is often used as an ornamental. It provides screening cover for some wildlife species.



Common reed



Species: *Phragmites australis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Arundineae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 2-4 m
Flowers: Jul-Nov



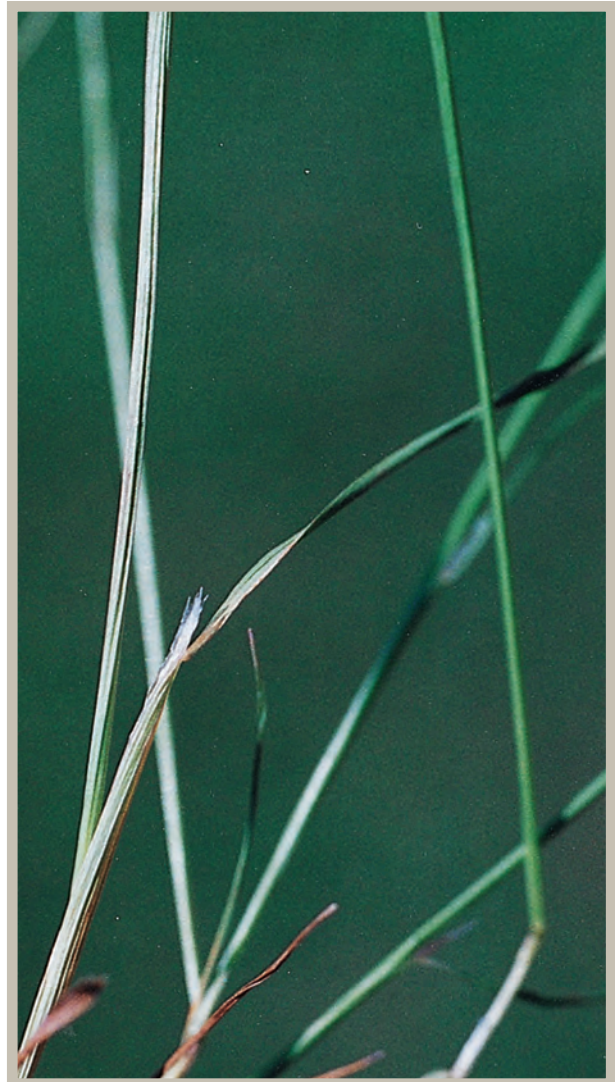
Most common in the Gulf Coast region of Texas, but is sometimes encountered as an introduced planting around ponds and ditches for bank stabilization. It provides screening and nesting cover for some species of wildlife. During certain growth stages, it is grazed by cattle.



Elliot bentgrass

Species: *Agrostis elliottiana*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 10-40 cm
Flowers: Mar-May

More common to the Southeastern part of the Plains. It is often found along roadsides and open, grassy areas. Each lemma has a fragile awn protruding from below the tip.



Winter bentgrass



Species: *Agrostis hyemalis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 15-70 cm
Flowers: Mar-May

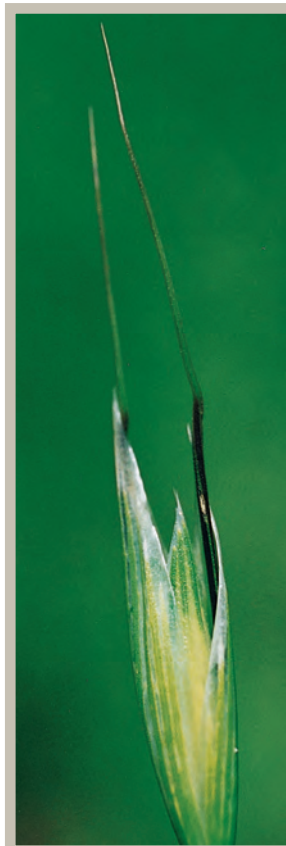
Frequently found in the Eastern Plains along roadsides, pastures and open woodlands growing on moist, sandy soils. The inflorescence is narrow early, becoming very open at maturity. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Wild oat

Species: *Avena fatua*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-120 cm
Flowers: Apr-May

An infrequent weed of roadsides and moist, disturbed soils. It is very similar to cultivated oats, but has long awns that have been reported to cause injury to grazing animals. When young, it provides fair forage to some wildlife species and cattle. It can be a problem in cereal grain crops.



Cultivated oats



Species: *Avena sativa*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-120 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

A highly palatable, cultivated forage. It is typically planted in the spring for grain or grazing instead of the fall, due to its susceptibility to freezing out. Provides good forage in the fall and winter for some wildlife species.



Ozarkgrass

Species: *Limnodea arkansana*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 20-60 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

Occurs infrequently throughout the Southeastern Plains on sandy soils in prairies and disturbed areas. Each spikelet contains a single floret with an awned lemma. Its leaf blades are glabrous.



Carolina canarygrass



Species: *Phalaris caroliniana*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 25-70 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

A palatable grass most often seen along roadsides, fencerows and open woodlands. Its inflorescence has a conspicuous appearance and is seldom confused with other grasses in our area. It is palatable to cattle and poor to fair for most species of wildlife.



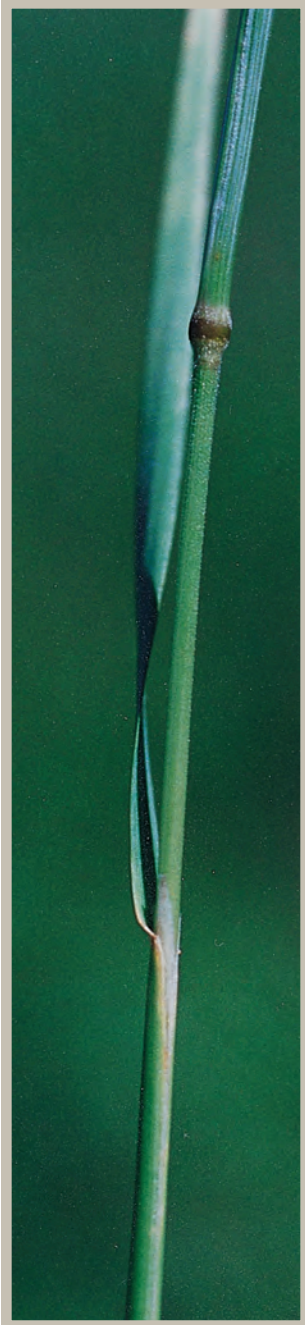
Prairie wedgescale

Species: *Sphenopholis obtusata*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 20-100 cm
Flowers: Apr-May

Infrequently found throughout the Plains along roadsides, moist prairies and open woodlands. One glume is narrow while the other is broad and more blunt at the tip.



Prairie trisetum



Species: *Trisetum interruptum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Aveneae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 10-60 cm
Flowers: Mar-May

Infrequently found throughout the Southern Plains mostly on disturbed sites. The lemmas are awned from below the tip, and each spikelet typically has two to four florets.



Erect brachyelytrum

Species: *Brachyelytrum erectum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Brachyelytreae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 60-100 cm
Flowers: Jun-Aug

Is only found in the eastern part of the Plains growing under forest canopies and along gravelly streambanks. The lemma is awned, and there is a stem protruding from the base of the floret. It is of little value as a forage for cattle and to most species of wildlife.



Broadleaf woodoats



Species: *Chasmanthium latifolium*
Synonym: *Uniola latifolia*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Centothecae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 100-150 cm
Flowers: Jun-Oct

More common in the eastern part of the Plains. Frequently found in moist woodlands and along stream banks. Its leaves are relatively short and broad, and the spikelets are strongly flattened. It provides fair forage and good screening cover for some wildlife species. It is a good forage for cattle within a limited season of use.



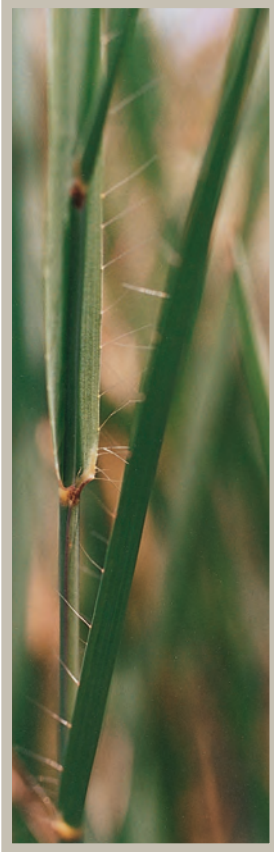
Narrowleaf woodoats

Species: *Chasmanthium laxum*
Synonyms: *Chasmanthium sessiliflorum*
Uniola sessiliflora
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Centothecae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 70-150 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

A grass of both deciduous and pine woodlands, frequently found in the Southeastern part of the Plains. Its spikelets are closely pressed to the branches of the inflorescence. Its value to wildlife is not well documented and, although limited in quantity, it provides fair forage for cattle.



Sideoats grama



Species: *Bouteloua curtipendula*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-100 cm
Flowers: Jul-Sep

The state grass of Texas. Its spikelets have an oat-like resemblance and appear to come off one side of the panicle branch. It can also be easily identified vegetatively by the evenly spaced glandular-based hairs at the lower part of the leaf. It provides cover for some wildlife species and good forage for cattle.



Blue grama

Species: *Bouteloua gracilis*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Chlorideae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 20-70 cm

Flowers: Jun-Oct

The state grass of Colorado and New Mexico. Mostly found in the the Plains and is one of the dominant grasses of short grass prairie. It typically has two to three inflorescence branches, and the spikelets extend all the way to the tip of each branch. It provides cover and forage for some wildlife species and good forage for cattle.



Hairy grama



Species: *Bouteloua hirsuta*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 15-55 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov



Frequently found in prairies with limestone and granite soils. Its spikelets do not extend to the tip of the inflorescence branches, which gives the tip a “stinger” like resemblance. It is of little value to most wildlife species and fair value to cattle.



Texas grama

Species: *Bouteloua rigidisetata*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Chlorideae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 10-50 cm

Flowers: Apr-Nov



Commonly found in grasslands throughout the Southern Plains and has little forage value due to its limited production potential. Its spikelets resemble the shape of a bell and tend to be spread more widely than those of other grammas. It is of little value to wildlife.



Red grama



Species: *Bouteloua trifida*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 10-40 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

Occurs most frequently in the Southwestern Plains, primarily on dry, rocky sites. Its leaves are short and narrow, and the inflorescence is more erect than those of other grammas in our region. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Buffalograss

Species: *Buchloe dactyloides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 5-25 cm
Flowers: Apr-Dec

A dominant grass of the shortgrass prairie but commonly found in overgrazed uplands in the tallgrass prairie. It has stolons, and the male and female flowers are produced on separate plants. Fair for some species of wildlife and good for cattle, but limited in forage quantity.



Shortspike windmillgrass



Species: *Chloris subdolichostachya*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-70 cm
Flowers: May-Oct

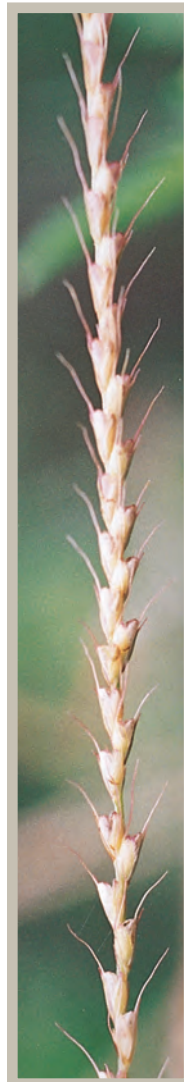
Mostly found in disturbed sandy sites in the Southern Plains. Its stems are flat at the base. The inflorescence is shaped like a “windmill.”



Tumble windmillgrass

Species: *Chloris verticillata*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 15-45 cm
Flowers: May-Oct

Tends to be more abundant in disturbed rocky sites. It increases under disturbance. Its inflorescence has a windmill-like appearance, and its stems are strongly flattened at the base. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Showy chloris



Species: *Chloris virgata*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 25-100 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

Typically found along roadsides and disturbed sites on heavier textured soils. The branches of its inflorescence are more erect than in other species of windmillgrass in our region.



Bermudagrass

Species: *Cynodon dactylon*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 10-50 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

The most common introduced grass of the Southern Plains and adapted to a variety of soils. Its inflorescence typically has three to five branches, and its leaves are conspicuously two-ranked. It is a poor grass for wildlife, but can be easily managed to provide good forage for cattle. Bermudagrass has caused significant habitat loss for most wildlife species in our area.



Bearded skeletongrass



Species: *Gymnopogon ambiguus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 25-60 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

Infrequently found in open woodlands in the Southeastern part of the Plains. Its inflorescence resembles tumble windmillgrass, but its leaves are conspicuously shorter and broader, and appear to be two-ranked. The lower leaves also mature quickly and die. This is not a desirable grass for wildlife and cattle.

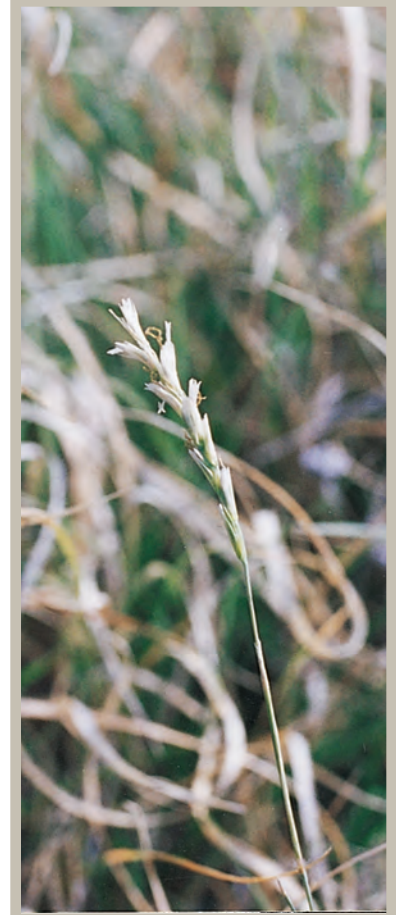


Common curlymesquite

Species: *Hilaria belangeri*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 10-30 cm
Flowers: Aug-Oct



Most common in the Southwestern Plains. Often confused with buffalograss vegetatively. However, its inflorescence is conspicuously different, and it does not bear male and female flowers on separate plants. Most frequently found on shallow, rocky, disturbed sites. It provides fair forage for cattle and is of little value to most wildlife species.





Species: *Hilaria mutica*
Synonym: *Pleuraphis mutica*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Chlorideae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-60 cm
Flowers: Apr-Oct

Most common in the Southwestern Plains on drier sites. The spikelets appear fan-shaped and become papery at maturity. It is of little value to most wildlife species and provides fair forage for cattle.



Tumblegrass

Species: *Schedonnardus paniculatus*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Chlorideae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 10-70 cm

Flowers: Apr-Dec

A low successional grass which tends to occur on shallow, disturbed sites. Its basal leaves are somewhat twisted and have a white margin. At maturity, the inflorescence breaks loose and tumbles across pastures in the wind, scattering seed. The mature inflorescences can typically be found piled up along fencerows or clumps of vegetation. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Poverty oatgrass



Species: *Danthonia spicata*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Danthoneae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 20-80 cm
Flowers: May-Jul

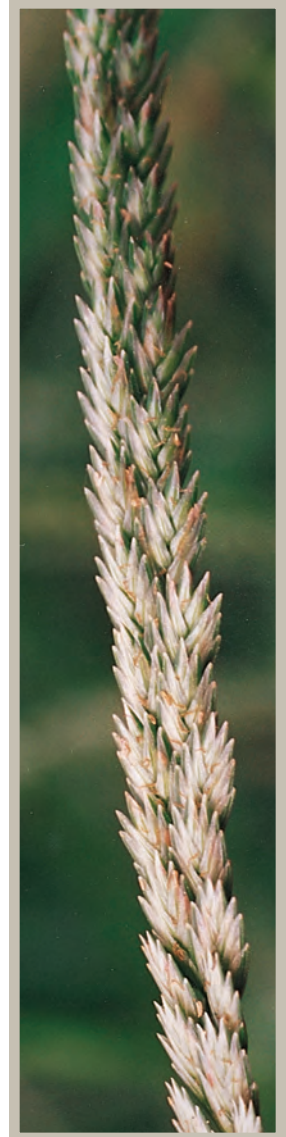
Found mainly in the Eastern Plains region in open woods on sandy soil. The inflorescence is narrow and short, and the awns are spirally twisted near the base.



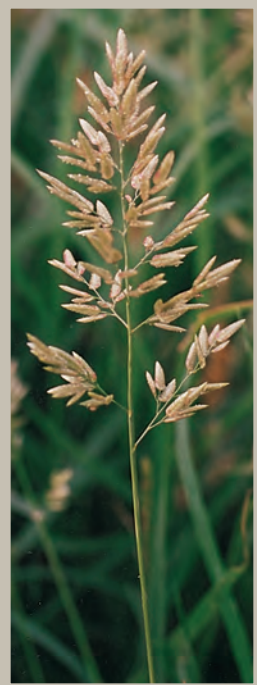
Goosegrass

Species: *Eleusine indica*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 10-60 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

A weed of many lawns and gardens and is commonly found on moist soils. Its inflorescence has two-eight spicate branches with a double row of spikelets on each branch. It is of poor value to most wildlife species and provides fair forage for cattle.



Stinkgrass



Species: *Eragrostis cilianensis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 10-60 cm
Flowers: Aug-Oct

Commonly occurs on shallow, disturbed sites. It is low growing and has an ovate-shaped inflorescence with ascending branches. It often has a strong odor.



Gummy lovegrass

Species: *Eragrostis curtipedicellata*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Eragrosteae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 20-60 cm

Flowers: May-Nov

Occurs throughout the Southern Plains, but is most frequently found in limestone or granite prairies. Its inflorescence branches are typically stiffly spreading and feel sticky to the touch. Is of little value to most wildlife species and cattle.



Weeping lovegrass



Species: *Eragrostis curvula*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 60-150 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

Adapted to sandy sites in the Southern Plains. It responds well to fertilizer, but palatability and quality for cattle can be a problem if not managed properly. Although not a recommended plant for wildlife, it can provide nesting cover for some wildlife species. It provides good forage for cattle early in the growing season, especially after it has been burned to improve palatability.



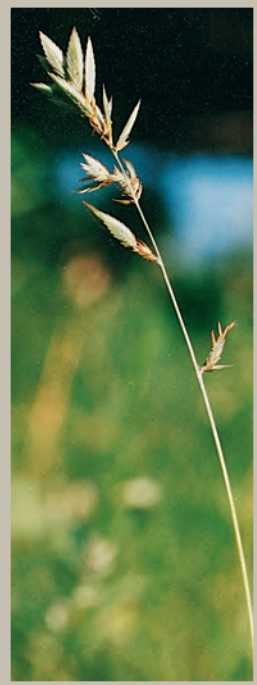
Plains lovegrass

Species: *Eragrostis intermedia*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-80 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

Occurs on a variety of soil types in the Southern Plains and is most abundant on disturbed or overgrazed sites. The leaf blades are usually hairy at the base, and the inflorescence is soft to the touch. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Red lovegrass



Species: *Eragrostis secundiflora*
Synonym: *Eragrostis oxylepis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-70 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

A weedy grass of shallow, disturbed sites in the Southern Plains. It is low growing, but typically extends its inflorescence well above the leaves. Although not a reliable characteristic, the spikelets of the inflorescence are usually tinged with red and the leaves and stems often appear blue-green. Its caryopses are larger than most other lovegrass species. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Purple lovegrass

Species: *Eragrostis spectabilis*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Eragrosteae

Longevity: Perennial

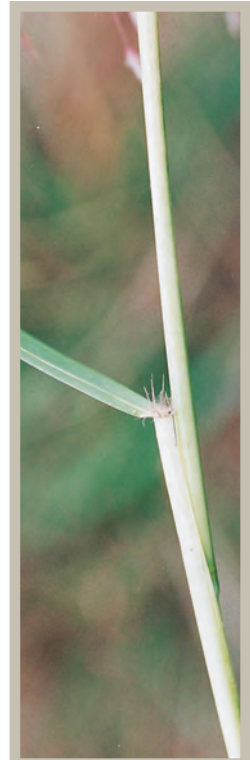
Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 40-75 cm

Flowers: Aug-Oct

Typically found in disturbed sites, especially in rocky or sandy prairies. Its inflorescence has a definite purple color and is usually two to three times taller than the plant. It has a knotty, rhizomatous base. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Sand lovegrass



Species: *Eragrostis trichodes*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 40-180 cm
Flowers: Jul-Dec



As the name implies, this grass is most frequently found growing on sandy sites. The inflorescence is usually 35 - 55 cm tall, often half the size of the entire plant, and there is a ring of hairs at the base of the leaf blade. It is of little value to wildlife and provides fair forage for cattle.



Hairy tridens

Species: *Erioneuron pilosum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 10-30 cm
Flowers: Apr-Oct

Most commonly found growing on dry, rocky sites in the extreme southwestern part of the Plains. The spikelet is typically hairy and often has short awns. The leaves have conspicuous white margins.



Green sprangletop



Species: *Leptochloa dubia*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-100 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

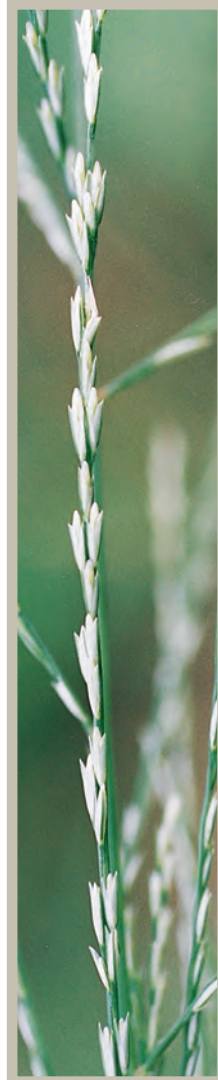
Infrequently found on rocky hillsides in the Southern Plains. Its inflorescence has a “sprangled” appearance, and the spikelets appear to be notched at the tip. It is of little value to most wildlife species, but provides good forage for cattle.



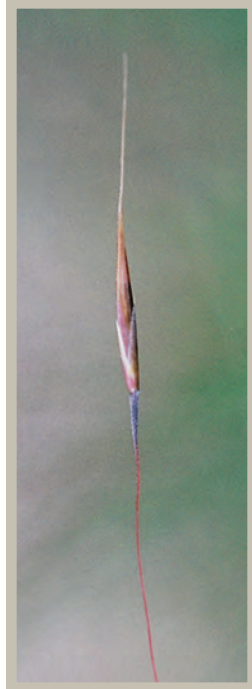
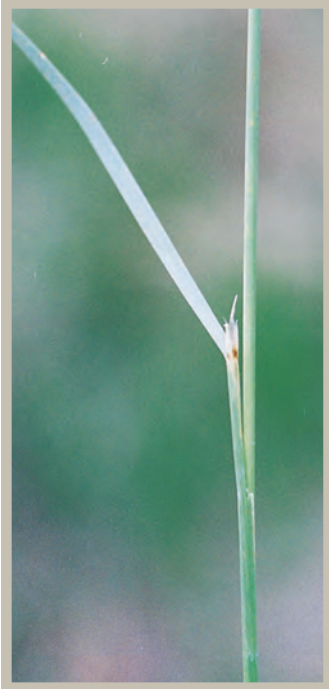
Red sprangletop

Species: *Leptochloa mucronata*
Synonym: *Leptochloa filiformis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 10-80 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Mostly found as a weedy grass in plowed fields and gardens in the Southeastern Plains. Its inflorescence typically has more branches than green sprangletop, and the spikelets are smaller. It is of little value to most wildlife species and, although limited in quantity, provides fair forage for cattle.



Seep muhly



Species: *Muhlenbergia reverchonii*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 40-80 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

Mostly found in limestone prairies of the Southern Plains growing in low-lying wet areas. The inflorescence can have a striking reddish appearance resembling Purple lovegrass. However, each spikelet contains a single, awned floret. It is of little value to most wildlife species and provides poor forage for cattle.



Nimblewill

Species: *Muhlenbergia schreberi*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Eragrosteae

Longevity: Perennial

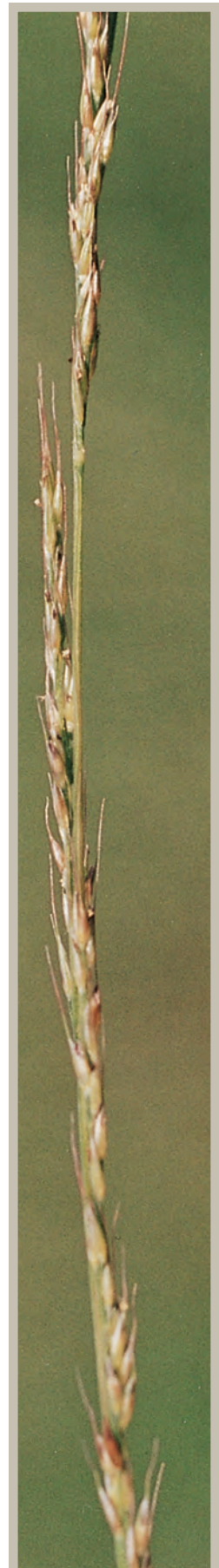
Season: Warm

Origin: Native

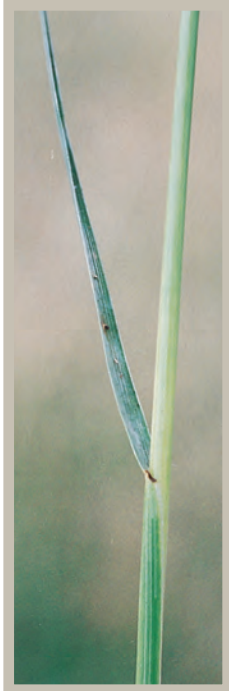
Height: 10-60 cm

Flowers: May-Nov

Infrequently found growing in shaded pastures and pens in the Eastern Plains. It is very branched at the base with slender, lax stems. The inflorescence is narrow, and each spikelet contains a single, awned floret. It is of fair value to cattle.



Alkali sacaton



Species: *Sporobolus airoides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-130 cm
Flowers: Apr-Sep

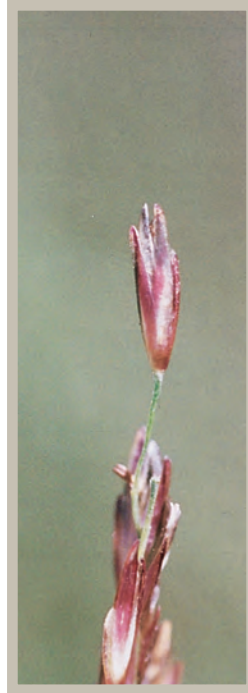
Mostly found on and is best adapted to alkaline or saline soils. The inflorescence is branched and wider at the bottom than the top. Each spikelet contains a single floret. It provides fair forage for cattle. Wildlife derive little use except for cover and seed for some species.



Tall dropseed

Species: *Sporobolus compositus*
Synonym: *Sporobolus asper*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 60-120 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

Commonly found growing in meadows and prairies on medium to heavy textured soils. It has a narrow inflorescence, and its seeds are larger than other dropseeds. The inflorescence is sometimes enclosed in the upper sheath. Leaves taper to a fine point. It is of little value to wildlife and provides fair forage for cattle.



Sand dropseed



Species: *Sporobolus cryptandrus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-120 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

As the name implies, this grass most commonly occurs on sandy sites in prairies and meadows. Its inflorescence is wide at the base and narrows to a point. It usually has a flag-leaf just below the inflorescence. It also has an obvious ring of hairs at the base of the leaf blade. It is of little value to wildlife and provides fair forage for cattle.



Poverty dropseed

Species: *Sporobolus vaginiflorus*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Eragrosteae

Longevity: Annual

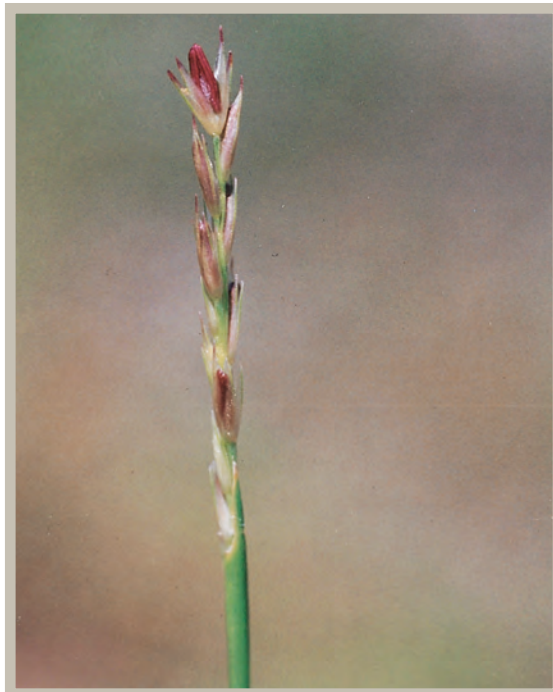
Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 15-70 cm

Flowers: Sep-Nov

Mostly found in the Eastern Plains in disturbed sites on sandy or clay soils. It produces minimal forage and has little value for livestock. It has an inflorescence similar to tall dropseed, but is a much smaller plant and “wiry” in appearance. It is of little value to most wildlife species.



White tridens



Species: *Tridens albescens*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-80 cm
Flowers: Mar-Nov

Most commonly found on heavier textured soils in low-lying moist areas. It has a spike-like inflorescence, and the spikelets appear whitish with a reddish-brown tinge, especially nearing maturity. It is of little value to most wildlife species and provides fair forage for cattle.



Purpletop

Species: *Tridens flavus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 60-150 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

Occurs on a variety of soil types and is common in old fields and open woodlands of the Eastern Plains. Its inflorescence is purple and often covered with an oily substance leading to other common names such as “soapgrass” and “greasegrass.” It is often confused with Johnsongrass, but has four to seven florets per spikelet, whereas Johnsongrass appears to have a single floret when viewed with the naked eye. It provides screening and nesting cover for some wildlife species. Seeds are used by some birds. It is of fair forage value to cattle.



Longspike tridens



Species: *Tridens strictus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-170 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Most frequently found on heavier textured, low-lying, moist soils of the Eastern Plains. However, it is also common to upland prairies. Its inflorescence is narrow, but with glumes exceeding or equaling the spikelet. It provides cover for some wildlife species and fair forage for cattle.



Texas tridens

Species: *Tridens texanus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-75 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

Infrequently found in the extreme Southwestern Plains on rocky, limestone soils. The spikelets are similar to those of white tridens, but with an open and drooping inflorescence.

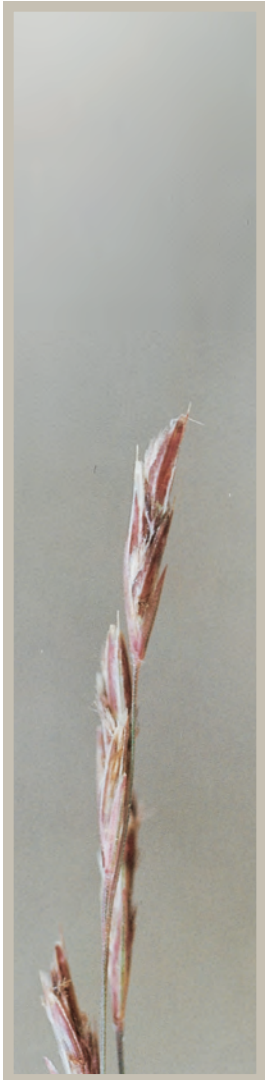


Purple sandgrass



Species: *Triplasis purpurea*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Eragrosteae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 45-80 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Occasionally found on sandy soils in open woodlands, forest margins and stream banks. The internodes along the stem are short, and the nodes and leaf blade bases are hairy. The leaf sheaths also appear enlarged. It is of little value to most wildlife species and cattle.

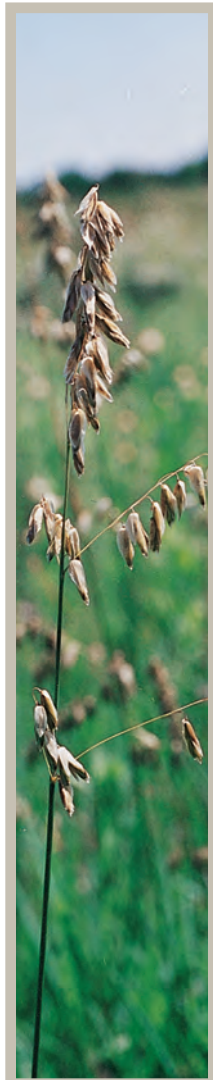


Threeflower melic

Species: *Melica nitens*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Meliceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Apr-Jun



Infrequently found in open woodlands and sometimes prairies on undisturbed sites. Its leaves appear two-ranked. It provides fair forage value for cattle.



Rice cutgrass



Species: *Leersia oryzoides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Oryzaceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 80-150 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

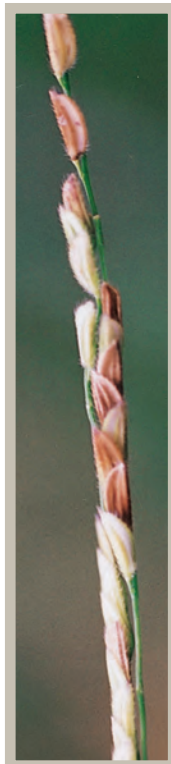
Most common along river banks and other wet places, growing on saturated soils. Its lemmas have short hairs along the margins and midrib, and appear somewhat flattened, especially along the margins.



Whitegrass

Species: *Leersia virginica*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Oryzeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Commonly found in growing on moist or saturated soils. Its lemmas have short hairs along the margins and midrib which are visible under close inspection. However, they are smaller and more narrow than those of rice cutgrass.

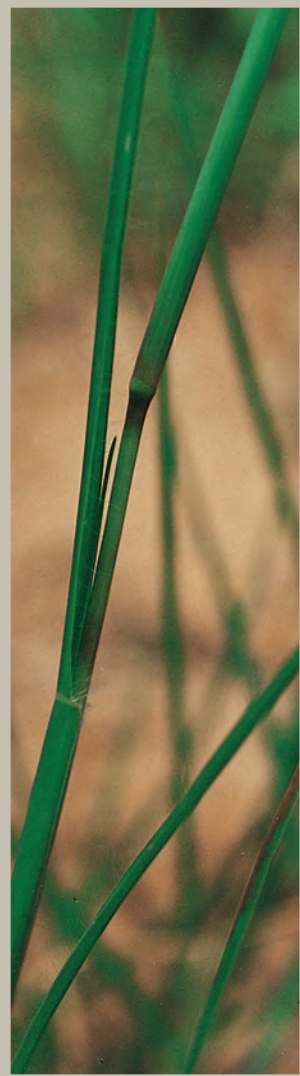


Common sandbur



Species: *Cenchrus spinifex*
Synonym: *Cenchrus incertus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 8-80 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

A common weed of lawns and pastures, and is often an indicator of poor fertility. Its burs have an affinity for bare human feet and are often a nuisance in hay, wool and animal hair. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle, but can be grazed in early summer.



Crabgrass

Species: *Digitaria ciliaris*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 20-80 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Commonly found growing throughout the Plains and is a weedy grass of lawns, gardens and fields. It is preferred by cattle and is often grown as a forage crop. It is of little value to most wildlife species.

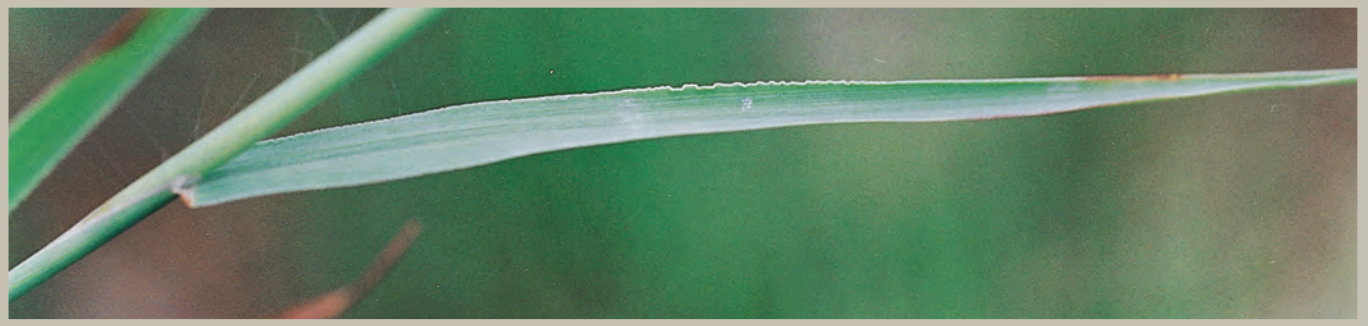


Fall witchgrass



Species: *Digitaria cognata*
Synonym: *Leptoloma cognatum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-60 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

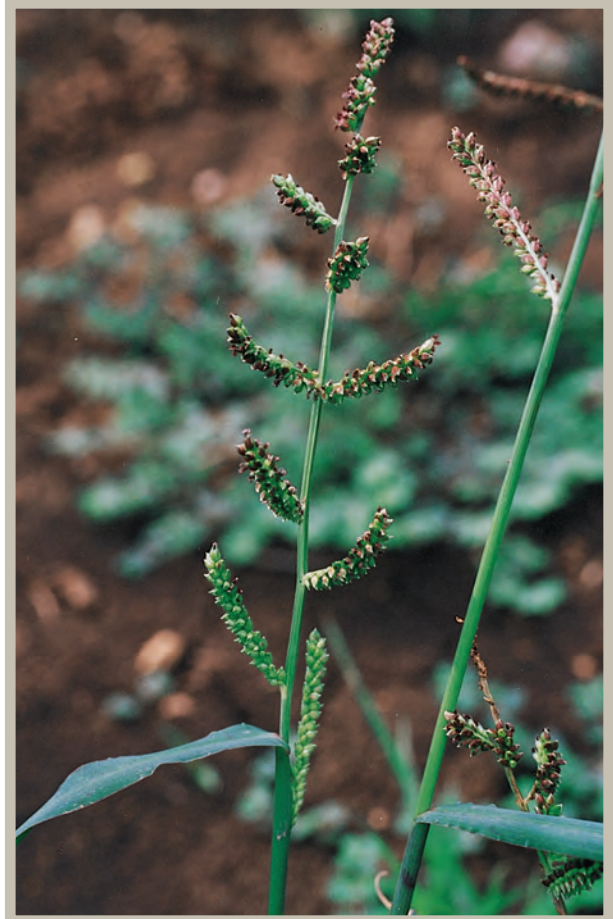
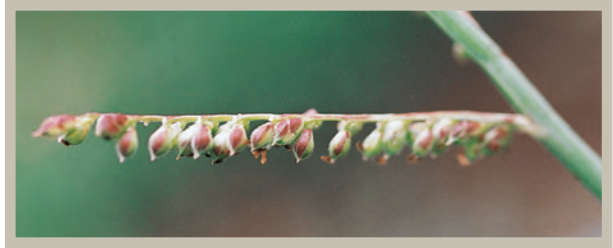
Most frequently found on sandy to clay prairie soils. Its inflorescence is open and diffuse at maturity with a single, terminal spikelet at the tip of each branch. Its leaf blades are typically wrinkled along the margins. It is of fair value to cattle and some species of wildlife.



Junglerice

Species: *Echinochloa colona*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 10-70 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Most frequently found in the Southern Plains in disturbed sites such as fields and gardens. The branches of the inflorescence contain spikelets which are awnless or only short-awned. There is no ligule at the base of the leaf blade.



Barnyardgrass



Species: *Echinochloa crus-galli*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-90 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Prefers moist areas and is commonly found in disturbed sites. The branches of the inflorescence contain spikelets which are obviously awned. There is no ligule at the base of the leaf blade. The seeds are used by many species of wildlife and can be planted for waterfowl. It provides fair grazing for cattle.



Prairie cupgrass

Species: *Eriochloa contracta*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Paniceae

Longevity: Annual

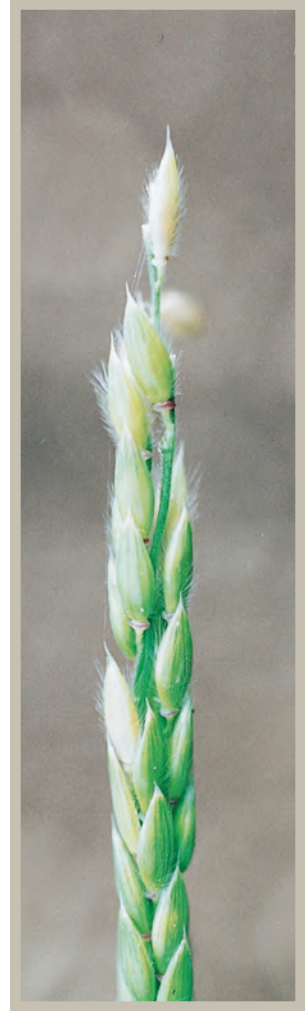
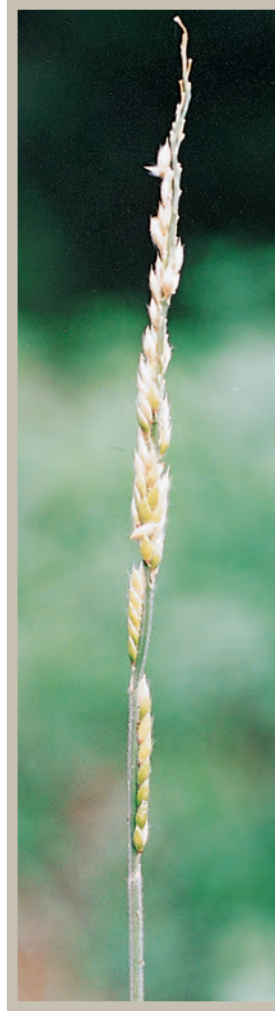
Season: Warm

Origin: Native

Height: 15-75 cm

Flowers: Apr-Nov

A weedy grass occurring in fields and ditches. The inflorescence is narrow, and each spikelet rests on a cup-like structure at the tip of a nearly glabrous pedicel. It forms bushy clumps, and its leaves have dense, soft pubescence. It has good forage value for cattle.



Texas cupgrass



Species: *Eriochloa sericea*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-90 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

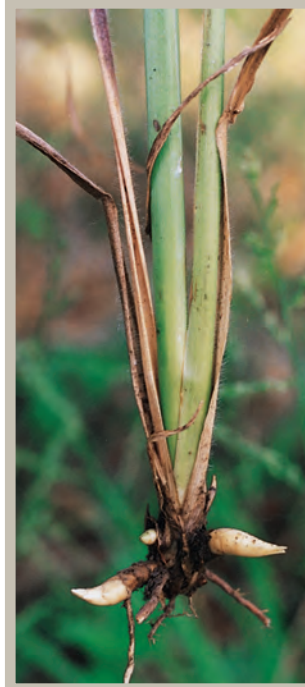
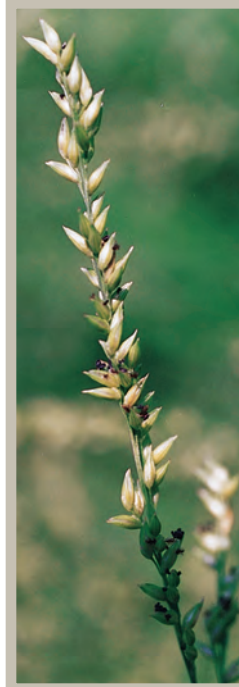
Most common in prairies and grassy openings of the Southern Plains. The inflorescence is narrow, and each spikelet rests on a cup-like structure at the top of a conspicuously hairy pedicel. It is of fair value to some wildlife species and provides good forage for cattle. It does not withstand heavy grazing.



Beaked panicum

Species: *Panicum anceps*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Jul-Nov

Most frequently found on moist, shaded soils in the Eastern Plains. Its spikelets are closely appressed to the branches of the inflorescence, and the leaf sheaths are keeled. Derived its common name because the spikelets resemble the curved beak of a bird. It provides cover and seed to some wildlife species and good grazing for cattle.



Common witchgrass



Species: *Panicum capillare*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-80 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

Occasionally found throughout the Plains and common to gardens and disturbed sites. It has a single spikelet at the tip of each branch, and the leaf sheaths are covered with spreading hairs. It is of poor value to cattle.



Kleingrass

Species: *Panicum coloratum*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Paniceae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Height: 50-120 cm

Flowers: May-Sep

Most common in the Southern Plains. It usually has glandular-based hairs at the lower part of the leaf blade. A fungus associated with this plant is known to cause photosensitization in sheep. It provides screening cover for some wildlife species. The seeds are used by some birds. It is a good forage for cattle.



Halls panicum



Species: *Panicum hallii*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 15-70 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

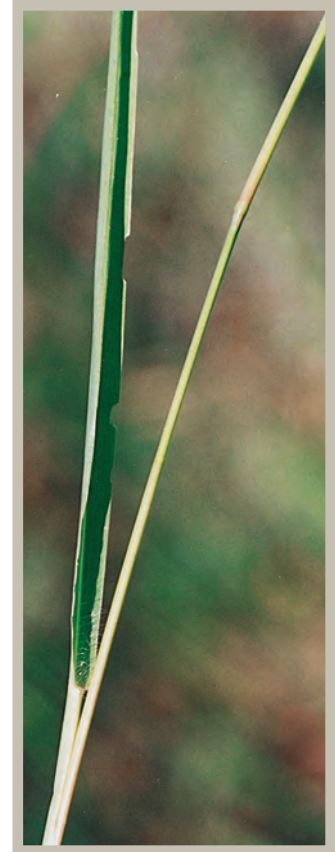
Typically found throughout the Southwestern Plains, but is most common on shallow, calcareous soils. The straw-colored, curled basal leaves are a distinct characteristic of this grass. The spikelets are appressed on short pedicels along the inflorescence branches. It is of little value to most wildlife species and is of fair forage value to cattle.



Gaping panicum

Species: *Panicum hians*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 25-75 cm
Flowers: Apr-Oct

Generally found growing in low, moist, shaded sites in the Southern Plains. The spikelets take on an inflated appearance and are blunt at the tip.



Vine mesquite



Species: *Panicum obtusum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-60 cm
Flowers: May-Oct



Typically found on wet, clayey soils that periodically become dry and is most common in the Southern Plains. This grass has long stolons, up to several feet, with swollen, hairy nodes. The spikelets are brownish and rounded, and occur along a narrow inflorescence. It is of fair value to some wildlife species and provides good forage for cattle. It withstands heavy grazing.



Scribner's panicum

Species: *Panicum oligosanthos*
Synonym: *Dichanthelium oligosanthos*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 20-60 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

Found growing throughout the Eastern Plains usually on loam to clay loam soils in prairies and open woodlands. It has a basal rosette of short, broad leaves during the winter and flowers in the summer and fall. The base of the leaf has long stiff hairs. It is of little value to most wildlife species and cattle.



Redtop panicum



Species: *Panicum rigidulum*
Synonym: *Panicum agrostoides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 40-100 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov



Most common in moist pastures and along stream banks and ditch banks. The lower stems are flattened, and the leaf blades are as much as 0.5 inch wide. The spikelets typically take on a reddish appearance. Some wildlife species may use the seed, and it is of fair forage value to cattle.



Roundseed dichanthelium

Species: *Panicum sphaerocarpon*
Synonym: *Dichanthelium sphaerocarpon*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 20-80 cm
Flowers: Mar-Nov

Most common in shaded woodlands. The base of the leaves clasp the stem, and its spikelets are much smaller than Scribner's panicum. It has a basal rosette of leaves in the winter and usually flowers in the summer and fall. It is of little value to most wildlife species and cattle.



Switchgrass



Species: *Panicum virgatum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 50-300 cm
Flowers: Aug-Oct

A common grass of the tallgrass prairie (considered one of the “big four” grasses) occurring on various soil types throughout the Plains. It is strongly rhizomatous and has leaves to over 0.5 inch wide. It often can be identified vegetatively by dense hairs at the leaf base. It provides nesting and screening cover for some wildlife species and excellent forage for cattle.



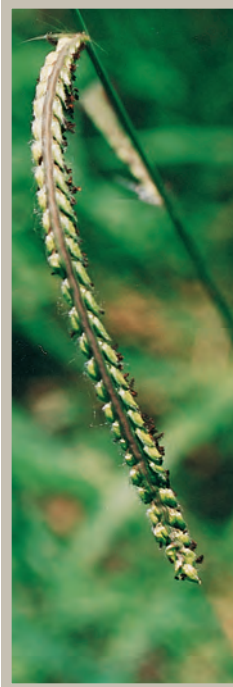
Egyptian paspalidium

Species: *Paspalidium geminatum*
Synonym: *Panicum geminatum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 2.5-80 cm
Flowers: Apr-Sep

Found mostly along ditches, streams and lakes of the Southern Plains. It generally grows in clumps from a somewhat rhizomatous base. The inflorescence is narrow with numerous erect branches.



Dallisgrass



Species: *Paspalum dilatatum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

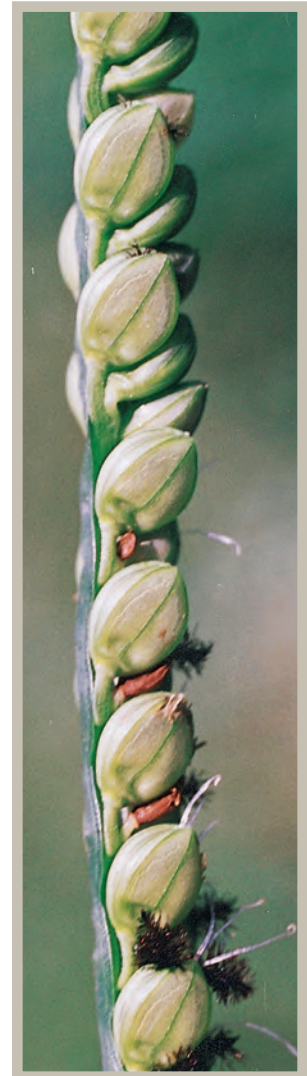
A weedy grass of disturbed areas and lawns. Sometimes seeded as a pasture grass in the Southern Plains. The spikelets are fringed with silky white hairs and occur in four rows along the inflorescence branch. It provides good forage for cattle, and the seeds are used by some wildlife species.



Florida paspalum

Species: *Paspalum floridanum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 100-200 cm
Flowers: Aug-Nov

Similar to Dallisgrass, but more robust. It is frequently found growing in grasslands and open woodlands in the Eastern Plains, but never abundantly. Spikelets are glabrous and broadly rounded. It provides good forage for cattle, and the seeds are used by some wildlife species.



Bahiagrass



Species: *Paspalum notatum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-75 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

Often seeded in the extreme Southeastern Plains on a variety of soils. The inflorescence typically has two branches each with two rows of spikelets. The spikelets are hard, shiny and glabrous. It is a poor grass for most wildlife species and is fair for cattle.



Hairyseed paspalum

Species: *Paspalum pubiflorum*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Paniceae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Warm

Origin: Native

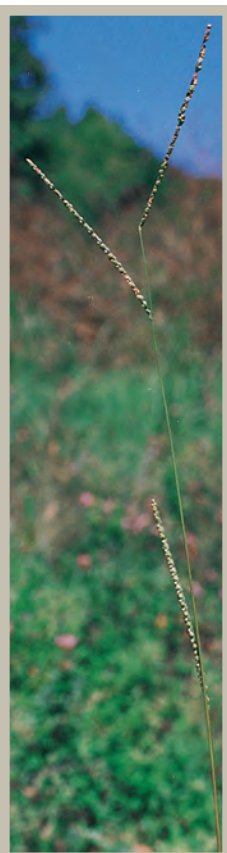
Height: 40-80 cm

Flowers: Apr-Nov

Infrequently found growing in low, moist, partially shaded areas. It is similar to dallisgrass, but with glabrous or pubescent spikelets. The seeds are used by some wildlife species, and it provides fair forage for cattle.



Thin paspalum



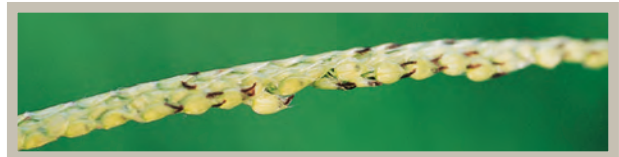
Species: *Paspalum setaceum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 20-100 cm
Flowers: May-Oct

Typically found growing in open grasslands and wooded sites on sandy textured soils in the Southeast. The spikelets are small, round and flattened on one side, and occur in two rows along the inflorescence branch. The leaves are often hairy and fringed. The seeds may be consumed by some wildlife species, and it provides fair forage for cattle.



Vaseygrass

Species: *Paspalum urvillei*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 50-200 cm
Flowers: May-Nov



Typically found growing in ditches, along streams and around lakes and ponds as well as other moist places in the Southeast. The inflorescence has up to 30 erect branches, and the spikelets occur in four rows along the branches. It is of little value to most wildlife species and provides fair forage for cattle.



Knotroot bristlegrass



Species: *Setaria parviflora*
Synonyms: *Setaria geniculata*
Setaria gracilis
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-100 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

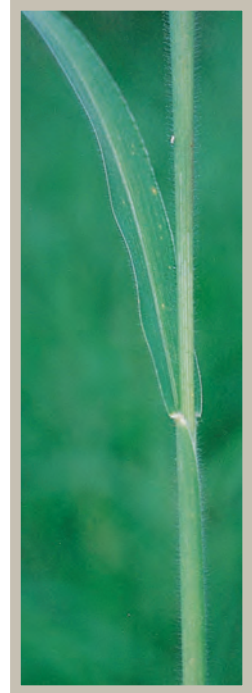
Usually found growing in low, moist areas. The stems arise from a “knotty” rhizomatous base, and the leaves and stems often appear purple. There are many bristles below each spikelet, and the inflorescence appears yellowish at maturity. It is of fair value to some wildlife species and provides fair forage for cattle.



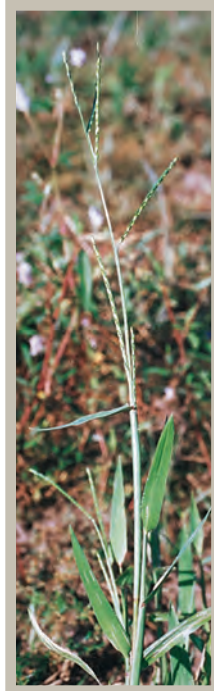
Browntop signalgrass

Species: *Urochloa fasciculata*
Synonyms: *Brachiaria fasciculata*
Panicum fasciculatum
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 30-120 cm
Flowers: Jun-Nov

Found mostly in the Southwest and is a weedy grass of low, moist areas. Its spikelets are conspicuously rounded with net-like venation visible under close inspection. It provides seed for some wildlife species and is of fair forage value to cattle.



Broadleaf signalgrass



Species: *Urochloa platyphylla*
Synonyms: *Brachiaria platyphylla*
Paspalum platyphyllum
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Introduced
Height: 25-90 cm
Flowers: Apr-Nov

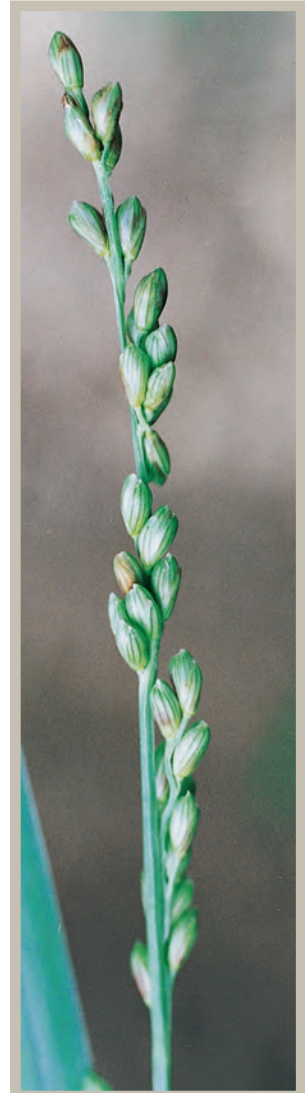
Occurs mostly on disturbed, moist soils and can often be found in fields and ditches in the Southern Plains. Its spikelets are attached to an expanded branch. It provides fair grazing for cattle and is of little value to wildlife.



Coloradograss

Species: *Urochloa texana*
Synonyms: *Brachiaria texana*
Panicum texanum
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Paniceae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Warm
Origin: Native
Height: 40-120 cm
Flowers: May-Nov

A weedy grass of fields in the Southern Plains. It is very similar to browntop signalgrass, but with a much narrower inflorescence and without net-like venation of the spikelets. It has fair forage value for cattle.



Little quakinggrass



Species: *Briza minor*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 15-50 cm
Flowers: Apr-May

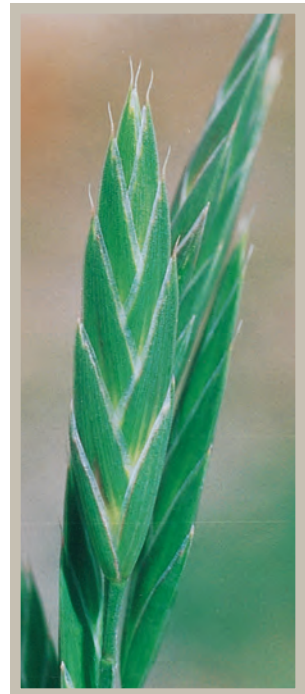
Infrequently found growing in moist, disturbed sites in the Southern Plains. It is a delicate, short-lived grass. The inflorescence is laxly open and very branched, and tends to quake with a gentle breeze. It is of little value to cattle.



Rescuegrass

Species: *Bromus catharticus*
Synonym: *Bromus unioloides*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 50-80 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

A common weed of lawns and disturbed sites, but also used as a forage grass. Its spikelets are noticeably flattened, and the lemma of each floret has a short awn 1-3 mm long. Its leaves are broader (5-12 mm) than many other species of bromes. It gets its name for coming to the producer's "rescue" following drought or winter. It provides forage for some wildlife species and cattle in late winter and early spring.

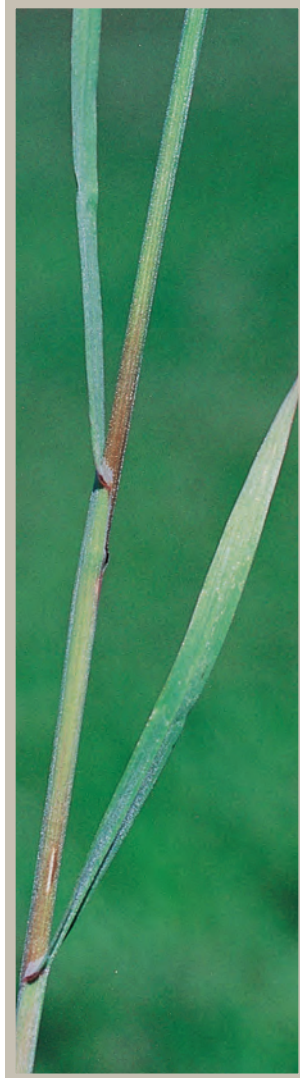
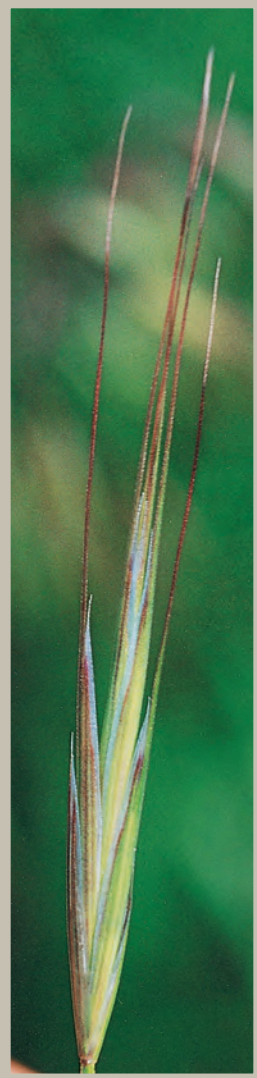


Ripgut brome



Species: *Bromus diandrus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 20-70 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

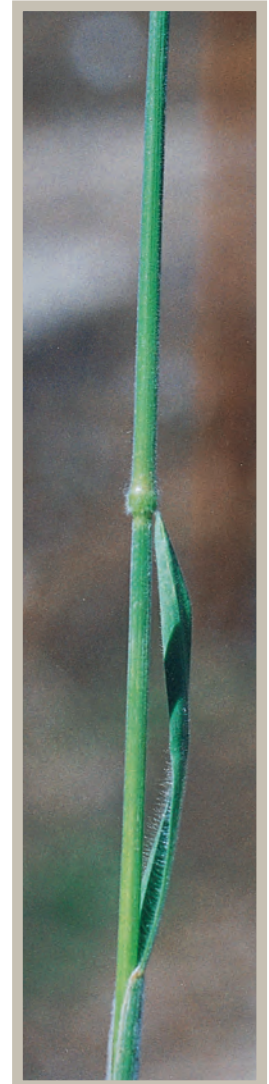
Occasionally found growing as a weed in waste places, roadsides and field borders. The inflorescence is loosely flowered, and the lemmas have awns 3-6 cm long. The herbage is usually covered with short, spreading pubescence.



Soft brome

Species: *Bromus hordeaceus*
Synonym: *Bromus mollis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 20-40 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

Occasionally found growing as a weed in waste places, roadsides and field borders. Sheaths are rounded with dense, straight and rather stiff hairs. Leaf blades are sparsely covered with pubescence above. Awns are soft, allowing it to be grazed without injury. When immature, it provides good forage for some wildlife species and cattle.

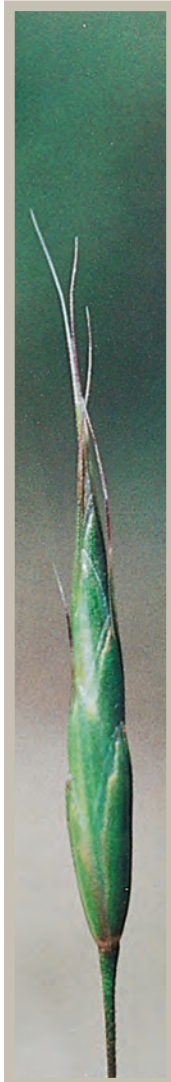


Japanese brome



Species: *Bromus japonicus*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-60 cm
Flowers: May-Jun

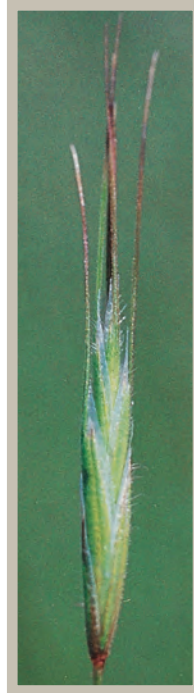
Common along roadsides and poorly managed pastures and fields. The inflorescence is loosely flowered, and the lemmas have awns 8-13 mm long. The lower stems are covered with long shaggy pubescence. The leaves are usually pubescent as well. It provides good forage for some wildlife species in late winter and early spring. It provides good forage for cattle in early spring, but lacks quantity.



Cheatgrass

Species: *Bromus tectorum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 25-60 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

A common weed of heavily grazed rangelands, pastures and disturbed sites. The inflorescence is loosely flowered, and the lemmas have awns 12-18 mm long. The herbage is usually softly pubescent. It provides forage in the early spring for some species of wildlife and is palatable to cattle in winter and early spring, but lacks quantity.



Orchardgrass



Species: *Dactylis glomerata*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 50-100 cm
Flowers: Apr-Jul

A common forage grass in the central and northern Plains. It tends to prefer shaded, fertile sites and is preferred by livestock. It is sometimes seeded in pastures. The spikelets of the inflorescence are tightly clustered on one side of its branches. Forage may be of fair value to some wildlife species in late winter and early spring.



Tall fescue

Species: *Festuca arundinacea*

Family: Poaceae

Tribe: Poeae

Longevity: Perennial

Season: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Height: 50-120 cm

Flowers: Apr-Jun

Common in the Eastern Plains and often seeded in pastures. It is sometimes found in the Western Plains on moist soils such as ditches, along creeks and near ponds or lakes. It is a desirable forage species for cattle if managed properly, but is also known to cause decreased animal performance and even the loss of tails and ears. It can cause pregnant mares to abort. It is of little value to most wildlife species although there is some documentation of occasional use by white-tailed deer.



Ryegrass



Species: *Lolium perenne*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 25 - 80 cm
Flowers: Mar - Jun

A common grass throughout and adapted to most soil types. It is often used as a forage grass in winter pasture plantings and seeded in bermudagrass pastures. The inflorescence has a zig-zag appearance, and the spikelets are positioned edgewise to the main stem. It provides fair forage for some wildlife species and good forage for cattle in the spring.



Annual bluegrass

Species: *Poa annua*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poaeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 6-30 cm
Flowers: Oct-May

A common weed found mostly in lawns and disturbed sites. It tends to grow in small clumps and seldom reaches heights greater than 10 inches. The spikelets appear delicate with no noticeable pubescence. It is a good forage species in the spring.



Texas bluegrass



Species: *Poa arachnifera*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 30-60 cm
Flowers: Apr-Jun



Infrequently found in the Southern Plains on sandy clay soils in undisturbed sites. Male and female plants grow separately. Female florets have hairs resembling cobwebs, and male florets appear smooth. Also reproduces by rhizomes. It is of fair value to some wildlife species and provides good forage for cattle on native range during the cool season.



Common sixweeksgrass

Species: *Vulpia octoflora*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Poeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 10-60 cm
Flowers: Apr-May

A short-lived annual most commonly found growing in disturbed areas. The inflorescence is somewhat narrow, and the lemmas have awns from 3-7 mm in length. It is of little value to wildlife and provides fair forage for cattle in the early spring, but with a very short period of use.



Texas wintergrass



Species: *Nassella leucotricha*
Synonym: *Stipa leucotricha*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Stipeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 25-100 cm
Flowers: Apr-Jun

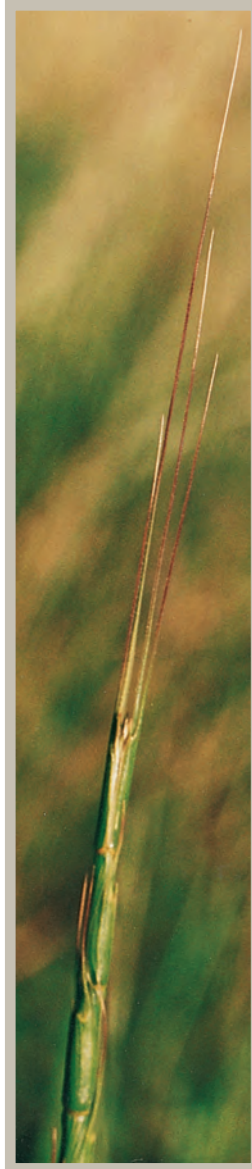
A common winter grass in the Southern Plains and adapted to a variety of soils. Its florets resemble a spear, and its dark green, very erect leaves feel like sandpaper when pulled between your fingers from top to bottom due to numerous, short, stiff hairs. It is a fair forage for cattle and some wildlife species, and increases under disturbance.



Jointed goatgrass

Species: *Aegilops cylindrica*
Synonym: *Triticum cylindricum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Triticeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 30-60 cm
Flowers: May-Jun

A weedy grass of roadsides, fields and waste places. The upper spikelets of the inflorescence have awns 3-8 cm in length. The inflorescence appears jointed, but typically breaks off from the base in its entirety at maturity. It has little grazing value for cattle.



Canada wildrye



Species: *Elymus canadensis*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Triticeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 100-150cm
Flowers: Apr-Jun

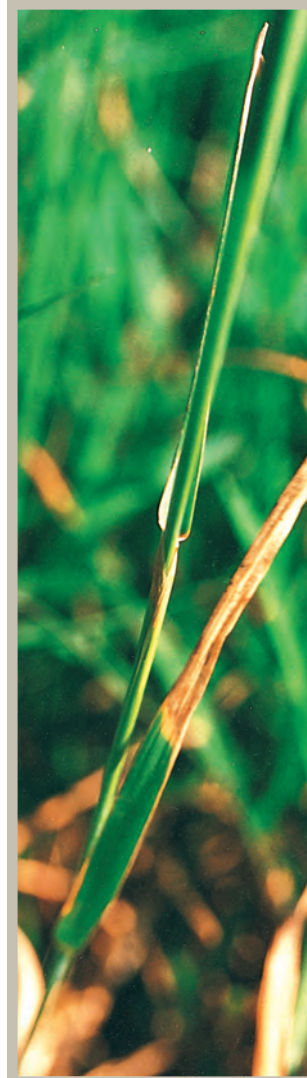
A perennial wintergrass common throughout the Plains. Typically found growing in shaded areas or where adequate moisture is available. It is highly palatable and preferred by cattle. The leaves are dark green and broad with sheaths that clasp the stem. The inflorescence looks similar to that of cereal grain rye. The glumes at the base of the seed form a "V." Provides forage and cover for some species of wildlife.



Little barley

Species: *Hordeum pusillum*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Triticeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 10-40 cm
Flowers: Mar-Jun

A common winter annual which occurs throughout the Plains. It is an indicator of disturbed sites, overgrazing or poor soil conditions. This plant is usually short, erect and quickly turns straw-colored at maturity. It is of little value to wildlife and cattle.



Western wheatgrass



Species: *Pascopyrum smithii*
Synonyms: *Elymus smithii*
Agropyron smithii
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Triticeae
Longevity: Perennial
Season: Cool
Origin: Native
Height: 35-85 cm
Flowers: May-Jul

The state grass of North and South Dakota and Wyoming. A perennial wintergrass often found growing throughout the Plains. Its vegetation is erect and has a blue-green color. The spikelets overlap by half their length. The leaves are rough textured. It is of fair value as a forage to some wildlife species and provides good forage for cattle.



Rye

Species: *Secale cereale*
Family: Poaceae
Tribe: Triticeae
Longevity: Annual
Season: Cool
Origin: Introduced
Height: 50-120 cm
Flowers: Apr-Jun

A cereal grain commonly planted as a forage crop in the Southern Plains. Typically found growing along roadsides and as a weed in fields and pastures. It seldom persists more than two to three years out of cultivation. It provides good forage for some wildlife species and cattle during winter and spring.



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Glossary

Awn – an extension of the midnerve of a glume or lemma.

Blade – the part of the leaf above the sheath.

Caryopsis – the fruit or seed of a grass.

Collar – the junction of a leaf blade and leaf sheath.

Culm – jointed grass stem composed of nodes, internodes, leaves and axillary buds.

Floret – includes the lemma, palea and reproductive structures within a spikelet.

Glabrous – without hairs.

Glumes – the pair of bracts at the base of a spikelet.

Inflorescence – the flowering part of a plant.

Internode – the area of culm (stem) between two nodes.

Keeled – “v” shaped.

Leaf – consists of a sheath, blade, ligule and auricles.

Lemma – the lowermost bract of a floret.

Ligule – structure at the junction of a leaf sheath and blade.

Node – the joint of a culm (stem).

Pedicel – the stalk of a spikelet.

Pubescence – with hairs.

Rhizome – a horizontal underground stem.

Rosette – a cluster or whorl of basal leaves.

Sheath – the lower part of a leaf that encloses the culm (stem).

Spikelet - the basic unit of a grass inflorescence (glumes + florets).

Stem – equals culm.

Stolon – a horizontal aboveground stem.

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 * synonym

Grasses of the Great Plains: A Pictorial Guide is part of a series of plant identification publications by the Noble Foundation's Chuck R. Coffey, pasture and range consultant, and Russell L. Stevens, wildlife and range consultant. This volume is an update to *Grasses of Southern Oklahoma and North Texas: A Pictorial Guide*, published in 2004.

Grasses of the Great Plains: A Pictorial Guide provides scientists, ranchers, land managers, students and agricultural consultants with a concise, beautifully illustrated means of identifying common grasses. The book features detailed color photographs and information on 116 different grass species that are the most likely to be encountered in the Great Plains.

Grasslands are vital to the Great Plains ecosystem, playing a role in soil stabilization, water infiltration, livestock production and wildlife habitat. Accurate identification of grasses is important for managing and conserving these natural resources. *Grasses of the Great Plains: A Pictorial Guide* is an excellent resource to help identify and learn about the grass species of the central United States.

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