



Backyard Wildlife



WILDLIFE HABITAT NOTES: Native Grasses and Legumes

The following list contains species of native grasses and legumes suited to a variety of uses, including wildlife food and cover, pasture, erosion control, and landscaping. With a few exceptions, the grasses are warm season, have a clumping habit rather than forming sod, and an extensive fibrous root system. Most species can be purchased as plants or seeds from mail order nurseries. The native grasses do not compete well with cool season exotics such as KY 31 fescue or bluegrass, and should not be planted in combination with them. Once established, minimal maintenance is needed to control weeds and maintain vigor. Multi-species or mixed plantings of native grasses make excellent habitat for wildlife, including the cottontail, bobwhite quail, wild turkey, woodcock, indigo bunting, yellow-breasted chat, prairies warbler, sparrows, and many small mammals and reptiles.

Average to Moist Sites

		Comments*
Grasses:	big bluestem (<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>)	f, tall
	bottlebrush (<i>Hystrix patula</i>)	s, medium
	curly dan (<i>Danthonia spicata</i>)	s, short
	deertongue (<i>Panicum clandestinum</i>)	medium, rhizomatous
	Indian grass (<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>)	f, tall
	Junegrass (<i>Koeleria cristata</i>)	f, medium, cool season
	little bluestem (<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>)	f, tall
	river oats (<i>Uniola latifolia</i>)	s, medium, rhizomatous
	rye, river (<i>Elymus riparius</i>)	s, medium
	rye, Virginia (<i>Elymus virginicus</i>)	s, medium
rye, woodland (<i>Elymus villosus</i>)	s, medium	
wild cane (<i>Arundinacea gigantea</i>)	f, s, tall, rhizomatous	
Legumes:	bundleflower (<i>Desmanthus illinoensis</i>)	medium
	bush clover, round headed (<i>Lespedeza capitata</i>)	medium
	bush clover, Virginia (<i>Lespedeza hirta</i> , <i>L. virginica</i>)	medium
	prairie clover, purple (<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>)	medium
	wild indigo, blue (<i>Baptisia australis</i>)	s, medium
	wild indigo, cream (<i>Baptisia leucophaea</i>)	s, medium
wild indigo, white (<i>Baptisia lactea</i>)	tall	

Dry Sites

Grasses:	broomsedge (<i>Andropogon virginica</i>)	medium
	broomsedge, Elliott's (<i>Andropogon elliotii</i>)	short
	Indian grass (<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>)	f, tall
	little bluestem (<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>)	f, medium
	prairie dropseed (<i>Sporobolus asper</i>)	medium
	sideoats grama (<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>)	s, medium
Legumes:	goatsrue (<i>Tephrosia virginiana</i>)	short
	leadplant (<i>Amorpha canescens</i>)	medium (shrub)
	milkvetch (<i>Astragalus canadensis</i>)	short
	partridge pea (<i>Cassia fasciculata</i>)	medium
	prairie clover (<i>Petalostemum candidum</i>)	medium
	wild senna (<i>Cassia marilandica</i>)	medium

Wet Sites

Grasses:	eastern gama (<i>Tripsicum dactyloides</i>)	f, tall
	fowl manna grass (<i>Glyceria striata</i>)	medium
	prairie cordgrass (<i>Spartina pectinata</i>)	tall
	prairie switchgrass (<i>Panicum virgatum</i>)	f, medium
	wood reed (<i>Cinna arundinacea</i>)	tall
Legumes:	indigo bush (<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>)	tall
	wild indigo, white (<i>Baptisia lactea</i>)	tall

* f=known value as forage; s=shade tolerant; average plant height is expressed as short (1 ft. or less), medium (2-4 ft.) or tall (over 4 ft.)

