



**Spring Burning**
  
 Photo by John M. Row



**big bluestem,**
  
*Andropogon gerardii*
  
 Vitman

USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Hitchcock, A.S. (rev. A. Chase). 1950. *Manual of the grasses of the United States*. USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 200. Washington, DC. 1950.

## 2008 King of the Prairie!

The Greenwood County Conservation District was pleased to announce the winner of the "King of the Prairie" contest at the 81<sup>st</sup> annual Cattleman's Day Celebration in Eureka, Kansas. To celebrate the importance of the prairie and the careful management of local ranchers, the district sponsored a contest to find the tallest big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*, in the county from the 2008 growing season. Hazel Russell, Eureka, won with her big bluestem entry reaching nine feet nine inches. She received a certificate, two steak dinners, a book of prairie poetry, and bragging rights.

Eighteen entries were received for "King of the Prairie" contest, which sparked some serious competition. The contest was a topic of conversation throughout the county as the entry deadline neared, with quite a few "I've already won!" comments made. Attesting to the fierce competition was the difference between first and second place, a mere eighth of an inch. In fact, the top four entries were above nine feet. Eleven additional entries were above eight feet.

Entries came from throughout Greenwood County. Participants' ages spanned 80 years, and they competed in both adult and youth divisions. The youngest contestant, Anthony Gulick of Eureka, was approximately six feet shorter than his entry. Participant Drusilla Land said of their grass, "There's a lot of it that's eight foot. . . And that's tall!"

When interviewed, Mrs. Russell detailed the beautiful fall afternoon spent gathering grass and a deep love of the prairie. Her place, The Hilltop Ranch, has been in the family since the late 1890s. Mrs. Russell came there as a bride in June 1953. "The grass is beautiful," said Mrs. Russell and commented on the particularly good year saying, "I'm so thankful." She

also wanted to thank her three sons, Steven, Alan, and Bryan, who help her manage the ranch. She credited the conservation programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service with assisting them with their pastures. Her love of the prairie is evident, "How special! What a heritage for Greenwood County to



**Hazel Russell, 1st Place Winner with winning big bluestem entry shares bragging rights with Pam Collinge (r), 2nd Place Winner**

have this tall grass prairie." She also loves to look off her deck and watch the "waves of bluestem blowing in the wind." When asked about big bluestem, Mrs. Russell replied, "It's my favorite!"



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TO CONSERVATION PROBLEMS**

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# Greenwood County Big Bluestem Contest Results

## Adult Division

Hazel Russell, Eureka	9 ft 9 in
Mike and Pam Collinge, Hamilton	9 ft 8 7/8 in
Charlie Williams, Toronto	9 ft 4 1/8 in
Ruth King, Toronto	9 ft 1 5/8 in
Lois French, Eureka	8 ft 10 3/4 in
John Huntington, Eureka	8 ft 11 3/8 in
Don King, Toronto	8 ft 5 5/8 in
Bud Wiggins, Eureka	8 ft 5 1/8 in
Drusilla Land, Eureka	8 ft 5 1/8 in
Randy Rupe, Eureka	8 ft 6 in
Paul Seeley, Eureka	8 ft 3 1/2 in
Susie Schwartz, Eureka	8 ft 10 1/8 in
Loria Howard, Eureka	7 ft 10 1/8 in
Eric Moots, Eureka	7 ft 11 5/8 in
John Cowley, Eureka	7 ft 4 3/4 in

## Youth Division

Wesley Moots, Eureka	8 ft 8 1/4 in
Anthony Gulick, Eureka	8 ft 6 1/4 in
Wayne Moots, Eureka	8 ft 5 1/2 in



**Youth Participants, Anthony Gulick, Wayne Moots, and Wesley Moots, proudly display their winning entries.**

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