



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

# Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem

*Schizachyrium scoparium (Michx.) Nash*

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI



Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources released a source identified ecotype of little bluestem for the Great Lakes region.

## Description

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem is a composite of several little bluestem collections and has features consistent with the species. It is a perennial, warm season bunch grass that grows from two to four feet tall. It has a dense, fibrous root system and flat, narrow basal stems. Sheaths are purplish at the base; ligules are small and membranous. Leaves are slightly folded and become reddish-brown at maturity. The white tufted seed heads are born in a raceme.

## Source

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

## Conservation Uses

The anticipated uses of Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little bluestem include providing food/cover for wildlife, increasing species diversity, controlling erosion and

restoring native plant environments. Little bluestem attracts insects and provides seed that is used as a food source by songbirds, game birds and small mammals. Many wildlife species also utilize little bluestem for nesting 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 habitats, particularly Southern Michigan, its source of origin. Little bluestem may also be useful in combination with other warm and cool season grasses for erosion control because of its massive root system.

## Area of Adaptation and Use

This species is found in dry open areas throughout much of the United States and is a major component of tall and mixed grass prairies. Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestems' primary utilization area is expected to be in the southern Great Lakes area.

## Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem can be established by seed. Little bluestem seeds often have 'fluffy' appendages that make the seed difficult to plant using a standard grain drill. Using a grain drill with a fluffy seed box is recommended for mechanical planting. Seed can be broadcast and cultipacked as well. Seeding rate for little bluestem is 2-5 lb. PLS/acre. Increase seeding rate by 10% if broadcast seeding methods are used. Care should be taken to limit seeding depth to no more than 1/4" in most soils, and ensure adequate seed to soil contact. Weed control during establishment is critical. Mowing and use of registered herbicides will aid in weed control. Always read and follow herbicide label directions.

## Ecological Considerations

No insect or disease problems have been observed on Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem.

## Seed and Plant Production

Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem produces seed annually. Seed can be harvested mechanically with a combine harvester or a brush "stripper". Timing is critical as mature seed can fall off of the plant. Seed cleaning can be done using a fanning mill. Using a debearder to remove the fluffy appendages will aid in seed cleaning and handling.



Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem



Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem being harvested



Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem in bloom

#### **Availability**

Seed/plant stock of Southlow Michigan Germplasm little 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 qualified parties for increase purposes.

*For more information, contact:*  
Rose Lake Plant Materials Center  
7472 Stoll Rd., East Lansing, Mi 48823  
Phone: 517-641-6300  
Fax: 517-641-4421

**Citation** Release Brochure for Southlow Michigan Germplasm little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI 48823. Published *September, 2001*, Revised *January, 2012*.

#### **Citation**

Release Brochure for Southlow Michigan Germplasm Little Bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI 48823. Published *September, 2001*, Revised *January, 2012*.

For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov/>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

*Helping People Help The Land*

**USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER**

*Helping People Help The Land*

**USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER**