

SUTHER PRAIRIE GERMPLASM

BIG BLUESTEM *Andropogon gerardii*

Suther Prairie germplasm big bluestem was released in July 2002 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cape May Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Cape May Courthouse, New Jersey. It is recognized as a source identified release.

Suther Prairie germplasm big bluestem was collected from a wet prairie 27 miles Northeast of Charlotte in Cabarrus County, North Carolina. Cabarrus County is in the Piedmont of North Carolina in plant hardiness zone 7a and receives 45-55 inches of precipitation per year. The average temperature in July is 79° F and 42° F in January.

Description

Big bluestem is a native, long-lived perennial, warm season grass that occurs from the short grass prairie region to the Atlantic Ocean. It is tufted with short, scaly rhizomes that form a sod. Big bluestem can reach a height of 6 to 8 feet on most sites. It is very leafy at the base with some leaves carried up on the stem. The seed heads normally have 3 spikelets that appear like a ‘turkey foot.’ Under proper management, big bluestem can produce a high quality forage.



Uses

Suther Prairie germplasm big bluestem can be used in several conservation practices, such as: critical area stabilization, conservation cover, field border, range seeding and pasture and hayland planting. Fertilization is recommended to improve productivity and forage quality. Plants should be grazed or hayed in the leafy stage before seed head emergence.



Grass seed drills equipped with specialized seed boxes are recommended for planting fluffy or “trashy” seed such as big bluestem.

Adaptation

Suther Prairie germplasm big bluestem is recommended for planting throughout the southern Piedmont and upper Coastal Plain areas of the eastern United States.