

NATIVE GRASSES, FERNS & GROWDCOVERS



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

For Gardening and Landscaping

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)

Famous prairie grass, grows in tall clumps with distinctive “turkey foot” seed heads. Turns shades of copper and gold in fall.

Light	Soil	Height (ft)	Zone
Full sun	Dry - moist	4 - 8'	3-9



Broad-leaf Sedge (*Carex platyphylla*)

Clump-forming sedge with soft blue-green leaves which are up to an inch wide. Does well in dry shade, often stays green all winter.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Part shade – shade	Dry – moist	4 - 12"	4-9



Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Short clumps of green to blue-green leaves, topped by flowering stems. Shades of red, gold, orange and copper in fall. Small, fluffy, white seed heads along stems. Often found on dry exposed sites, such as rocky ridges or dry sand plains. Many cultivars available. Drought tolerant.

Light	Soil	Height (ft)	Zone
Full sun	Dry - moist, well drained	1 - 3'	3-9



Bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*)

Clump-forming cool season grass with airy three-dimensional seed heads. Decorative grass for light shade. Tolerates dry soil, clay soil, limestone soils. Grows on rock outcrops.

Light	Soil	Height (ft)	Zone
Partial shade – light shade	Dry - moist	1 - 4'	5-9



Northern Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Dense clumps of long thin leaves resemble shaggy heads of hair. Easily grown decorative grass. Can be used as groundcover on dry sunny sites. Delicate-looking open seed heads. Gold fall color.

Light	Soil	Height (ft)	Zone
Full sun	Dry - moist, well drained	1 - 3'	3-8



Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)

Sometimes used for lawns, this low-growing sedge is often found growing under oak trees. Forms a delicate wispy groundcover layer in shade, becomes heavier and clump-forming in sun.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Full sun - shade	Dry - moist, well drained	4 - 8"	4-8



Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)

Heart-shaped leaves 3 inches across make this a beautiful groundcover for shade, especially under deciduous trees.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Partial shade - shade	Moist, well drained	4 - 8"	4-8



Appalachian Barren Strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*)

A little-known native groundcover with glossy dark green leaves which even thrives in dry shade. Semi evergreen. Yellow flowers in spring.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Full sun - shade	Dry - moist	3 - 6"	3-8



Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Creeping evergreen groundcover with small shiny leaves and red berries. Forms dense mat on rock outcrops or acidic sandy soil.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Full sun - partial sun	Dry - moist, well drained	3 - 9"	2-6



Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)

Wonderfully durable evergreen fern for shade.

Light	Soil	Height (in)	Zone
Partial shade - shade	Moist - dry	12 - 18"	3-8



CONTACT INFORMATION

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PHOTO CREDITS

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