

little bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Liliopsida

Order: Cyperales

Family: Poaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Little bluestem is a perennial, mid-height grass that grows in a clump. Its leaves are arranged alternately along the stem. Each leaf is simple, entire and linear. The leaf is folded. At the place where the leaf blade joins the stem a narrow, white line is present. Flower parts are in threes. The flowers are borne along numerous thin stalks that may be four inches long. Flower spikelets develop in pairs, some sessile and fertile, others stalked and sterile. Up to 200 flowers stalks may be present in a bunch. The fruit is a grain. Little bluestem may attain a height of three feet.

BEHAVIORS

Little bluestem may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in dry to moist prairies, fields and open woodlands. Flowers are produced from August through October. This plant grows from May until frost. Little bluestem is an important food source for grazing animals of the prairie. Its leaves, stems and fruit all provide food for wildlife. Its root system may grow as far as four and one-half feet underground. The grains are dispersed by wind.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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