


Sorghastrum nutans

Indian Grass

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

This native* of much of North America was once one of the dominant grass species of the tallgrass prairie. It is a good choice for erosion control on slopes and combines well with robust wildflowers such as butterfly-weed, purple and orange coneflowers, and other native grasses.



Grass / Sedge	Summer Foliage, Spikelets, Fall Panicles	
Height: 3–5 feet		
Spread: 2–3 feet		
Bloom Color: Light brown		
Characteristics		
Clumping perennial grass with upright form		
Alternate , sheathing, 2'-long, blue-green leaves		
Metallic-sheened, golden panicles of terminal fertile, awned & infertile, hairy- pedicellate spikelets with yellow stamens rise above foliage to 5–6' in Sept.		
Foliage turns yellow-orange in fall		
Feathery panicles turn bronze & persist in winter		
Attributes		
Tolerates clay , rocky, poor, dry, occasionally wet soils; drought; erosion; air pollution; and Black Walnut; no serious pests or diseases; deer -resistant		
Tends to flop in moist, rich soil or excess shade		
Winter interest		
Provides nesting habitat for birds, small mammals, and native bees; foliage feeds grasshoppers and mammalian herbivores; larval host for ~7 lepidopterans , including Delaware & other skippers		
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for	
Soil Requirements : Well-drained	<i>Cortaderia selloana</i> - Pampas Grass	
Light Requirements : Sun	Miscanthus sinensis - Chinese Silver Grass	
Water Requirements : Dry, Moist	Cenchrus purpurascens - Fountain Grass	
Cut back to ground in early spring before new growth appears	Phyllostachys , Pseudosasa , Bambusa spp. - Bamboo	
Use as a vertical accent in borders, mass in meadows, or plant to control erosion on slopes	*It is native to DC, common in DE, and present primarily in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of MD and throughout PA. In VA, it is common throughout, except in the outer Coastal Plain, where it is infrequent to rare.	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 2–9		

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Images by Elaine Mills, National Garden, U.S. Botanic Garden and (top right) Meadowlark Botanical Gardens