



Danthonia spicata

Poverty Oatgrass

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

Native* throughout the Mid-Atlantic, this diminutive bunchgrass is being tested as a component of a sustainable lawn. Its deep roots hold soil in place, helping to control erosion. It thrives in sunny exposures with poor, dry soil and requires minimal watering and mowing. In addition, its low, dense tufts tolerate moderate foot traffic, providing a cushiony feel underfoot.



Grass	New & Old Foliage in Spring; En Masse in Fall
Height: 4–24 inches	
Spread: 1 foot	
Bloom color: Green	
Characteristics	
Cool-season perennial grass that forms low, dense tufts	
Wiry, medium to bluish-green leaf blades, 4-6” long and about 1/16” wide; curling, buff-colored older leaves retained at base of clump	
Thin flowering culms rise above tufts, bearing delicate panicles with 2–13 light green to whitish spikelets and twisted, pubescent awns May–July	
Expands slowly from short rhizomes	
Attributes	
Tolerates drought; dry, rocky, compacted, or alkaline soil; moderate foot traffic	
No serious pests or diseases; not palatable to rabbits or deer	
Larval host for ~2 lepidopterans	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Well-drained, infertile soil	<i>Festuca</i> species - non-native Fescues
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Lolium perenne</i> - Perennial Ryegrass
Water Requirements : Dry	<i>Poa pratensis</i> - Kentucky bluegrass
Declines in rich soil or if shaded by taller plants	
Use in a meadow garden, as a ground cover or lawn alternative, and for erosion control	*It is native to DC and mostly common throughout DE, MD, PA, and VA, although in NoVA, it has not been reported in Arlington County or Alexandria.
Hardiness : USDA Zones 3–8	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, Glencarlyn Library Community Garden