

Schizachyrium scoparium

Little Bluestem

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

Common throughout Virginia and some of the Mid-Atlantic Region,* native Little Bluestem gives a brilliant landscape performance. Tight, erect, spiky bluish-green stems and leaves transition to a sizzling fall display of oranges, reds, yellows and purplish-browns topped by fluffy seed heads that persist into winter.



Grass / Sedge	Summer Foliage, Racemes, Fall Foliage
Height: 1½–4 feet	
Spread: 1½–2 feet	
Bloom Color: Purplish-bronze	
Characteristics	
Clumping, erect, ornamental perennial grass	
Slender, often folded, linear, light blue or green leaves alternate on reddish or tan culms (stems); sheaths w/ long V-shaped opening; swollen, purplish nodes	
Fertile culms terminate in 1–3” long, ascending racemes of paired spikelets (one fertile sessile and one sterile on pedicel) from June–October	
Fluffy, silvery-white seed heads July–November	
Bronze to rust fall color persists through winter	
Reseeds; cespitose but may spread by short rhizomes	
Attributes	
Tolerates clay soil, poor soil, shade (somewhat), drought (extremely well), air pollution, and Black Walnut; intolerant of wetlands and flooding; no serious pests or diseases; deer rarely damage	
Winter interest	
Attracts birds to its seeds, especially in winter; larval host to ~7 skippers ; wildlife cover	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Average, well-drained soil	Agropyron cristatum - Crested Wheatgrass
Light Requirements : Sun	Bambusa , Phyllostachys , Pseudosasa - Bamboo
Water Requirements : Dry	Festuca arundinacea - Tall Fescue
Cut to ground in late winter to early spring	Miscanthus sinensis - Chinese Silver Grass
Use as an accent or en masse in borders, meadow gardens, naturalized landscapes, or steep slopes	Pennisetum alopecuroides - Fountain Grass
Hardiness : USDA Zones 3a–9b	* <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> var. <i>scoparium</i> is native in DC and common throughout DE and VA. It is found mostly in MD’s Coastal Plain and the south in PA.
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Mary Free, Sunny Garden



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