



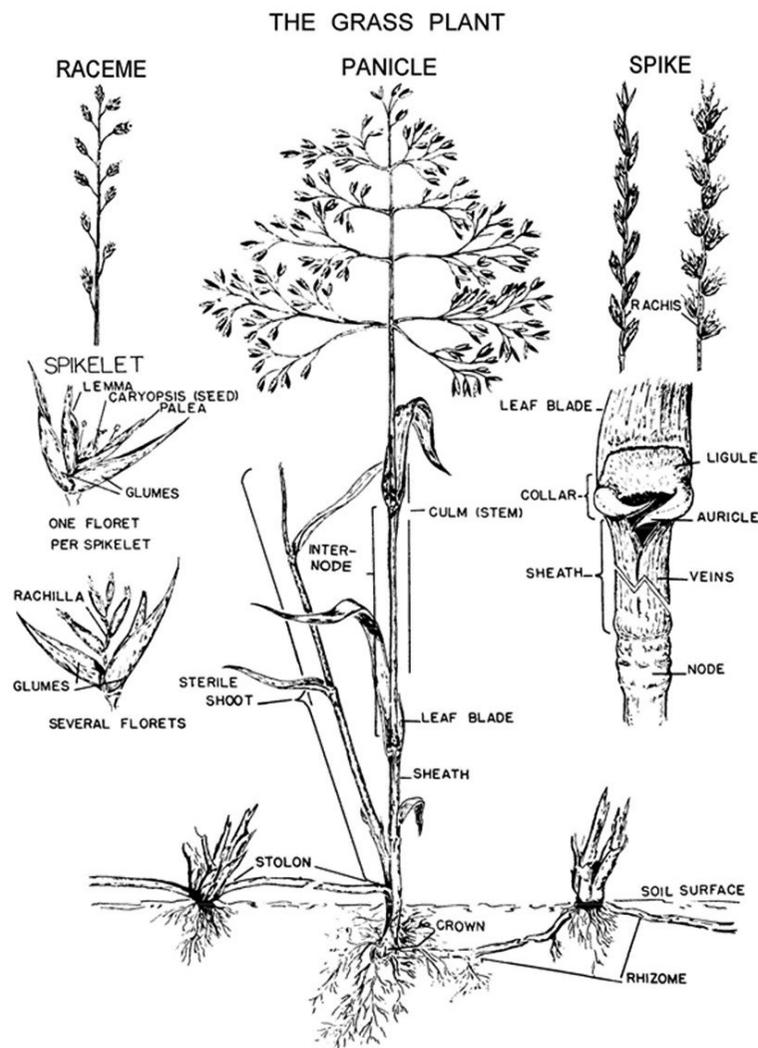
Rangeland and Pasture Grasses of Kansas

K-STATE
Research and Extension

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Dedication

Rangeland and Pasture Grasses of Kansas is dedicated to my father, Walter Fick Sr. Dad was instrumental in teaching me to identify plants at an early age. Many of the grasses I learned in the Sandhills of Nebraska are found in Kansas. The native grasslands of Kansas are rich in species diversity. The tallgrass prairies of eastern Kansas epitomized by the Flint Hills give way to the mixed prairies of central Kansas and eventually by the shortgrass plains of western Kansas. Included in this publication are the common native grasses found throughout the state. I have also included introduced grasses and some of the pasture grasses used as forage crops for grazing, haying, and irrigated pasture. I hope you enjoy the publication and find it useful in helping identify the major grasses of Kansas.



Cover

The grass on the cover of this publication is little bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.)]. Found in every county in Kansas, little bluestem was designated as the state grass of Kansas in 2010.

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N = Native
I = Introduced

Chalk Flats



Central Dissected Prairie — Trego County



Eastern Subhumid Prairie (Flint Hills)



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Alkali sacaton**

Specific Name: *Sporobolus airoides*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

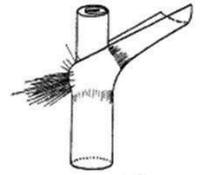
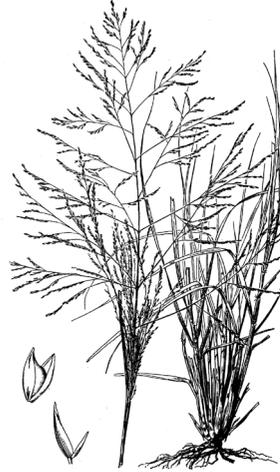
Description: 1 to 4 feet tall, coarse stemmed, growing in tough clumps (no rhizomes). The long slender blades are hairy at the throat. The panicle is pyramid-shaped and loosely flowered.

One-flowered spikelets are on short pedicels.

Wildlife Value: Provides cover and forage for ground nesting birds.

Habitat: Grows in meadows and valleys, especially in alkaline soil.

Desirable grass to seed in saline sites.



Common Name: **Big bluestem**

Specific Name: *Andropogon gerardii*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

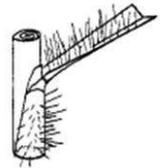
Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 3 to 8 feet tall with short scaly rhizomes. Lower sheaths and leaves with scraggly hairs. Seedhead with two to six, but often with three digitate racemes resembling a turkey foot.

Highly preferred by cattle and gives the prairie a reddish-brown color in the fall.

Wildlife Value: Provides good cover and grazing for big game and small mammals. Seed used by birds.

Habitat: Deep, fertile soils but grows on shallow, ridges and near limestone ledges during wet periods.



Common Name: **Blue grama**

Specific Name: *Bouteloua gracilis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 1 to 2 feet tall, growing in tufts with erect stems but sometimes forming a sod. Often with a few hairs at the collar.

The inflorescence bends with maturity resembling a human eyebrow. Rachis does not extend beyond the florets.

Wildlife Value: Big game and small mammals graze the plant and seed valuable food source for many bird species.

Habitat: Plains and hills. Decreases with heavy grazing on drier sites but increases in the tallgrass prairie.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Broomsedge**

Other Names: Broomsedge bluestem

Specific Name: *Andropogon virginicus*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Poor

Description: 2 to 4 feet tall bunchgrass growing in small tufts. The overlapping flattened sheaths are hairy along the margin of upper blade surface toward the base. The upper two-thirds of the plant is freely branching with the leaves turning straw yellow when mature. The seed heads are partly enclosed in a sheath. Seldom grazed by any kind of animal except with concentrated grazing in the spring. Usually indicative of low soil pH and low P.

Wildlife Value: Poor food source, but may provide some cover for nesting.

Habitat: Found mostly in eastern Kansas but increasing in the Central Kansas Sandstone Hills. Invades in cool-season pasture and native hay meadows.



Common Name: **Buffalograss**

Specific Name: *Buchloe dactyloides*

Other Names: *Bouteloua dactyloides*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

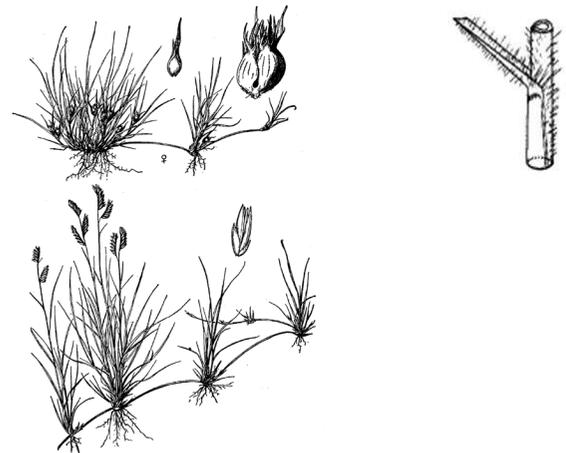
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 4 to 12 inches tall stems but sod-forming with creeping stolons which take root at the leafy nodes. Leaves with short bristly hairs on both the upper and lower surface. The male and female plants grow in separate colonies. Female plants bear seed in burlike clusters among the leaves (top). Male plants have a two or three spiked flaglike seed head (bottom).

Wildlife Value: Too short for cover and nesting. Seed eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Plains and prairies, especially on heavier textured soils.



Common Name: **Caucasian bluestem**

Specific Name: *Bothriochloa bladhii*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Poor to fair

Description: 24 to 36 inches tall. Upper and lower surface of leaves glabrous or sparsely hairy. Few long hairs at base of leaf blade. Light green stems and leaves turn straw colored with maturity. Plants grow in dense clumps. Seedheads are a panicle with central axis longer than branches.

Wildlife Value: Poor

Habitat: Waste areas, roadsides, and prairies. Seeded stands invading native sites. Invasive species in Kansas.



Common Name: Common reed

Specific Name: *Phragmites australis*

Other Names: Giant reed, *Phragmites communis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native and Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair to Good

Description: 6 to 12 feet tall. Rhizomes (up to 10 feet) and stolons (up to 80 feet) extremely long. Native *Phragmites* has loosely attached sheath and black dots on stem. Non-native *Phragmites* has sheath tightly adhered to stem. Yellowish nodes. Purple-brown feathery panicle. Usually, in dense stands.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by waterfowl. Muskrats eat rhizomes and stems. Escape cover for birds and other wildlife.

Habitat: Scattered around Kansas in wetland areas including marshes floodplains, ditches, ponds, and rivers.



Common Name: Eastern gamagrass

Specific Name: *Tripsacum dactyloides*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 3 to 8 feet tall. Short, knotty rhizomes. Leaf blades up to 0.75 inches wide and rough on the edges. Seedhead with one to three spikes with male flowers above and female below. Close relative of corn.

Wildlife Value: Good protective cover for nesting. Palatable for deer. Seed eaten by birds, small mammals, and deer. Attracts butterflies. Larval host for bunchgrass skipper.

Habitat: Grows in fertile bottomland, swamps, and along stream-banks. Will grow on fertile uplands under good management.



Common Name: Fall witchgrass

Specific Name: *Leptoloma cognata*

Other Names: Carolina crabgrass (*Digitaria cognata*)

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

Description: 1 to 2 feet tall. Small bunchgrass with tough, hairy, stem bases. Leaves less than 1/4 inch wide and 4 inches long and wavy on one side. Shallow root system. Seedhead open panicle with purple tinge. Seedhead breaks off and tumbles.

Wildlife Value: Seed used by numerous birds.

Habitat: Dry soil and sandy fields.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Florida paspalum**

Specific Name: *Paspalum floridanum*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 3 to 5 feet tall. Rhizomatous. Leaves are $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide and 14 to 20 inches long. Dense tuft of hair just above ligule.

Seedhead consists of two to six racemes with seeds in crowded pairs. Sand paspalum (*Paspalum setaceum*) is a perennial bunch-grass found on sandy soils with sheaths and leaves usually densely hairy.

Wildlife Value: Provides good cover. Large seed eaten by quail, dove, and turkey.

Habitat: Moist soils in grassy areas and open woodland in southeast Kansas.



Common Name: **Giant sandreed**

Specific Name: *Calamovilfa gigantea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair; good winter forage.

Description: 4 to 6 feet tall. Rhizomatous. Leaf blade is $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide at the base and tapers to a long tip. Leaf sheath is usually glabrous or sometimes with hair near ligule. Seedhead is open panicle 12 to 24 inches long. Closely related to prairie sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*).

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by birds.

Habitat: Best adapted to sandy soils in south central and southwest Kansas.



Common Name: **Green bristlegrass**

Specific Name: *Setaria viridis*

Other Names: Green foxtail

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Warm

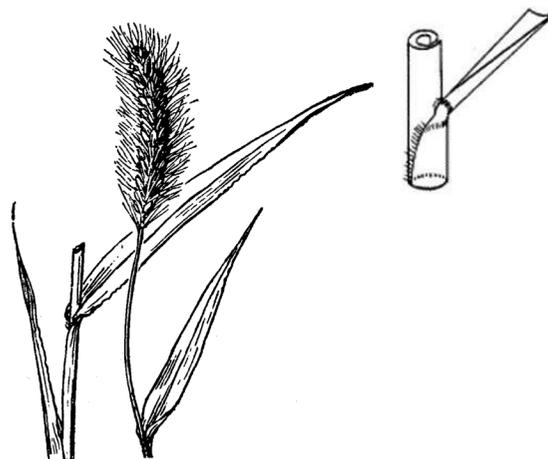
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair before seedhead emerges.

Description: 6 to 36 inches tall. Leaf blade flat and glabrous. Dense erect cylindrical seedhead. Spikelets with green bristles.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Disturbed sites, roadsides, and weedy problem in pastures.



Common Name: Hairy grama

Specific Name: *Bouteloua hirsuta*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

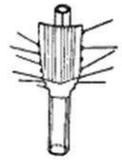
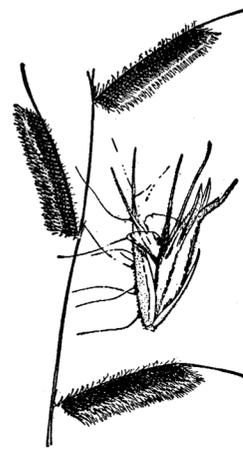
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair, but a good winter forage as it cures well.

Description: 10 to 20 inches tall. Small bunchgrass. Margin of leaf blade with distinct hairs. Inflorescence 1 to 4 spikes, about 1 inch long. Rachis extends beyond spikelets.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by birds and small mammals. Larval host for skippers.

Habitat: Adapted to sandy soils, rocky hills and plains.



Common Name: Indiangrass

Specific Name: *Sorghastrum nutans*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

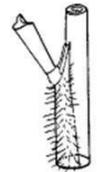
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 3 to 7 feet tall. Rhizomatous. Prominent ligule resembling hammer claw or rabbit ears with maturity. Seedhead bronze plumelike panicle.

Wildlife Value: Deer eat foliage. Seed consumed by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Deep well-drained floodplain, upland medium textured and sandy soils.



Common Name: Inland saltgrass

Specific Name: *Distichlis spicata*

Other Names: Saltgrass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

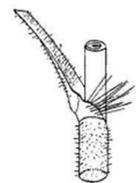
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

Description: 15 to 35 inches tall. Forms dense mats with rhizomes and stolons. Long hairs at collar. Dioecious, male spikelet (left) and female spikelet (right). Erect stiff stems.

Wildlife Value: Used by waterfowl and small mammals.

Habitat: Alkaline sites and salt marshes..



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Johnsongrass**

Specific Name: *Sorghum halepense*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair – Good

Description: 1½ to 8 feet tall. Sodforming rhizomatous species.

Pubescent at nodes. Glabrous leaf blades up to 1 inch wide.

Prominent mid-rib. Open panicle. Membranous ligule.

Wildlife Value: Provides cover for upland game birds.

Habitat: Widely distributed in Kansas. Open ground, fields, waste places, roadsides, and pastures. Noxious weed in Kansas. Accumulates nitrates and prussic acid under environmental stress.



Common Name: **Knotroot bristlegrass**

Specific Name: *Setaria parviflora*

Other Names: Marsh bristlegrass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

Description: Up to 35 inches tall. Knotty rhizomes. Leaf blade 6-10 inches long, ¼ inch wide with prominent midrib. Seedhead is a spikelike panicle 1 to 2 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Birds consume seeds.

Habitat: Southcentral and southeast Kansas on clay and loamy lowlands and uplands.



Common Name: **Little bluestem**

Specific Name: *Schizachyrium scoparium*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair to Good

Description: 1½ to 3 feet tall. Distinct bunchgrass. Very flat basal sheaths. Leaves usually smooth but can have hair near sheath.

Purplish to bluish-green stems, turning brown at maturity.

Inflorescence has small fuzzy seeds. State grass of Kansas.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by birds. Provides cover for ground birds and small mammals. Nesting material for native bees. Larval host for skippers.

Habitat: Widely distributed growing on well drained medium to dry soils.



Common Name: Plains muhly

Specific Name: *Muhlenbergia cuspidata*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 8 to 20 inches tall. Grows in clumps. Stems with thick, knotty, scaly base. Leaves narrow and folded. Seedhead very narrow spikelike panicle 2 to 5 inches long. Short fibrous roots.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by wild turkey.

Habitat: Commonly grows with little bluestem and sideoats grama on upland and slopes.



Common Name: Prairie cordgrass

Specific Name: *Spartina pectinata*

Other Names: Sloughgrass, Ripgut

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: New growth good

Description: 6 to 8 feet tall. Long strong rhizomes. Leaf blade with sharp serrated edges. Seedhead consists of 10 to 20 spikes with up to 40 spikelets arranged alternately in two rows.

Wildlife Value: Provides cover for game birds, song birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Poorly drained soils, along roadsides, ditches, streams, floodplains, and wet meadows.



Common Name: Prairie dropseed

Specific Name: *Sporobolus heterolepis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

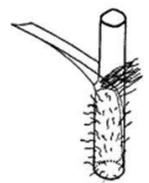
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 2 to 3 feet tall. Bunchgrass forming large tufts. Long fine textured leaves. Sheath and collar hairy. Inflorescence an open panicle.

Wildlife Value: Cover for small mammals and prairie birds. Seed consumed by birds and small mammals. Nesting and structure for native bees.

Habitat: Prairies, native hay meadows. Moist to dry conditions, but not wet.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Prairie sandreed**

Specific Name: *Calamovilfa longifolia*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

Description: 3 to 5 feet tall. Stout spreading rhizomes. Leaf blades long and stiff. Hairs on inside of collar. Semi-open panicle 6 to 13 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Seeds used by songbirds and small rodents.

Habitat: Found on coarse sandy soils.



Common Name: **Prairie threeawn**

Specific Name: *Aristida oligantha*

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Warm

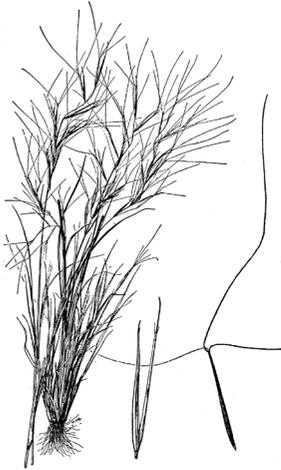
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Poor

Description: 6 to 20 inches tall. Flat leaf blade about ¼ inch wide. Seedhead loose open panicle. Three awns nearly equal in length about 1½ to 3 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by some birds. Nesting for small fur and game animals.

Habitat: Old, abandoned fields; deteriorated rangelands; and disturbed areas.



Common Name: **Purple lovegrass**

Specific Name: *Eragrostis spectabilis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair

Description: 1 to 3 feet tall. Short rhizomes, but appears as a bunch-grass. Silky hairs around collar. Open bright purple panicle. Hairs prominent at base of panicle branches.

Wildlife Value: Nesting cover for some upland birds.

Habitat: On many soil types, but especially abundant on sandy soil.



Common Name: Purple threeawn

Specific Name: *Aristida purpurea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor once awns emerge

Description: 6 to 30 inches tall. Long narrow leaves with long hairs at collar. Narrow panicle with three twisted equal length awns about ¾ to 4 inches long. A number of other perennial threeawns occur in Kansas including Red threeawn, Fendler threeawn, and Arrowfeather threeawn.

Wildlife Value: Provides some cover for small mammals and reptiles.

Habitat: Dry coarse or sandy soils, rocky hills, and overgrazed rangeland.



Common Name: Purpletop

Specific Name: *Tridens flavus*

Other Names: Purple tridens

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

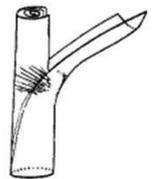
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Bunchgrass 35 to 75 inches tall. Leaves long, smooth, glossy green. Hair on back side of collar. Open panicle usually purple in color.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by birds and small mammals. Nesting material. Deer eat foliage. Attracts butterflies.

Habitat: Colonizes along roadsides. Found in pastures and open woods. Adapted to shallow, droughty, infertile soil.



Common Name: Sand bluestem

Specific Name: *Andropogon hallii*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good – Excellent

Description: Up to 7 feet tall with 4- to 8-inch rhizomes. Leaves mostly at base of plant, with prominent mid-rib, light green to bluish in color. Sheaths glabrous. Two to seven digitate racemes (usually three).

Wildlife Value: Foliage eaten by many wildlife species and seed consumed by upland birds.

Habitat: Commonly found on sandy soils.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Sand dropseed**

Specific Name: *Sporobolus cryptandrus*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 3 feet tall. Tuft of long white hairs around collar. Upper sheath partially encloses seedhead. Inflorescence an open panicle.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by birds, prairie dogs, and other small mammals.

Habitat: Grows primarily on sandy soils. Tolerates drought.



Common Name: **Sand lovegrass**

Specific Name: *Eragrostis trichodes*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

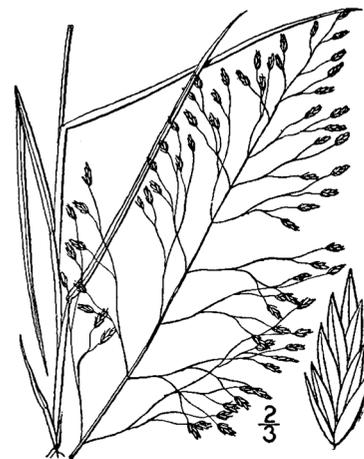
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good to Excellent

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 4 feet tall. Prominent hairs on the collar. Somewhat reddish stem base. Open panicle with purple florets. Considered an “ice cream” grass.

Wildlife Value: Palatable to deer, elk, and proghorn. Good nesting cover for upland gamebirds.

Habitat: Grows primarily on sandy soils.



Common Name: **Sandbur**

Specific Name: *Cenchrus longispinus*

Other Names: Mat sandbur

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good until burs emerge

Description: Small bunchgrass 10 to 30 inches tall. Can grow upright or form a mat. Sheaths flat. Leaves 2 to 5 inches long and $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide. Burs with numerous sharp spines.

Wildlife Value: Seed occasionally eaten by small mammals.

Habitat: Disturbed open areas and roadsides, especially in sandy soils.



Common Name: **Sideoats grama**

Specific Name: *Bouteloua curtipendula*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: 1 to 3½ feet tall with short scaly rhizomes. Inflorescence has a zig-zag rachis with numerous spikelets. Seeds resemble oats. Hair on leaf edges. Lower leaves turn white and curl with maturity.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by wildlife such as deer. Seed eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Widely distributed on numerous ecological sites.



Common Name: **Silver bluestem**

Specific Name: *Bothriochloa laguroides*

Other Names: Silver beardgrass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Bunchgrass 18 to 36 inches tall. Stems bent at base. Swollen nodes with ring of stiff hairs on upper nodes. Fuzzy silvery seedhead.

Wildlife Value: Birds and butterflies.

Habitat: Adapted to heavier soils. Found on disturbed sites, roadsides, and overgrazed rangeland.



Common Name: **Switchgrass**

Specific Name: *Panicum virgatum*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Rhizomatous sod-forming species 3 to 5 feet tall. Patch of hair on lower leaf blade. Leaves ¼ to ½ inch wide and 6 to 18 inches long. Open panicle with purplish spikelets. Palatable to grazing livestock in early summer before stems and seed heads emerge.

Wildlife Value: Excellent for nesting and cover. Birds and mammals use the seed and foliage. Grazed by deer and elk. Attracts butterflies and larval host for skippers.

Habitat: Best adapted on moist soils, but can grow on calcareous and acid soils.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Tall dropseed**

Specific Name: *Sporobolus compositus*

Other Names: Composite dropseed

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Small bunchgrass 1½ to 4 feet tall. Panicle usually not exerted out of sheath. Tuft of hair at the collar. Long tapering leaves. Low palatability at maturity, although grazing animals will consume the seedheads.

Wildlife Value: Provides little cover for nesting. Seeds consumed by small mammals and songbirds.

Habitat: Grows on dry sites with heavy to sandy soils.



Common Name: **Tumblegrass**

Specific Name: *Schedonnardus paniculatus*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor

Description: Small bunchgrass 8 to 25 inches tall. Short flattened leaves. Membranous ligule. Panicle more than half the height of the plant. Seedheads break off and tumble with the wind.

Wildlife Value: Poor for nesting, cover, and food.

Habitat: Grows on sandy soils and overgrazed areas.



Common Name: **Vine mesquite**

Specific Name: *Panicum obtusum*

Season of Growth: Warm

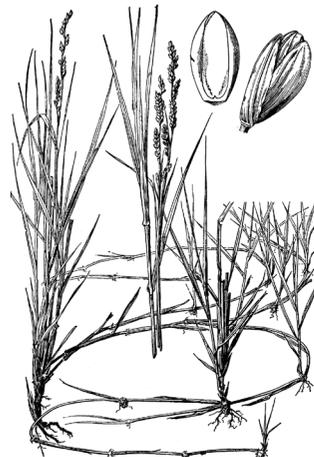
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Produces long wiry stolons that typically root at the nodes. Grows to height of 2 feet. Narrow panicle with relatively large spikelets that turn to a dull brown color with maturity.

Wildlife Value: Seeds used by wildlife.

Habitat: Grows on low sites with good moisture on sandy loam to clay loam soils.



Common Name: **Windmillgrass**

Specific Name: *Chloris verticillata*

Other Names: Tumble windmill grass

Season of Growth: Warm

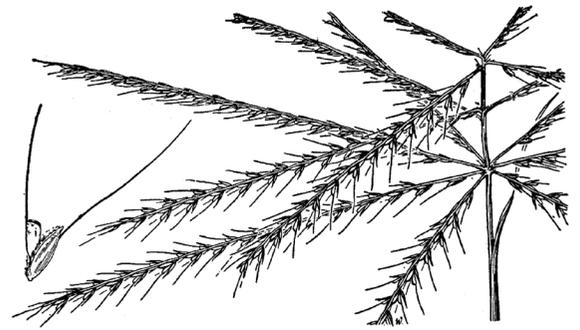
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor

Description: Short bunchgrass. Sheaths glabrous with few hairs at collar. Stems flattened and leaves keeled. Panicle consists of 2 to 4 whorls of one-sided spikes.

Wildlife Value: Seeds used by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Grows on all soil types on abused rangeland, roadsides, and waste areas.



Common Name: **Witchgrass**

Specific Name: *Panicum capillare*

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Warm

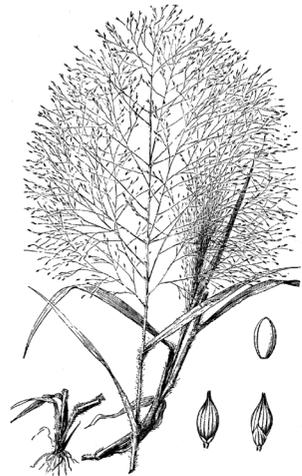
Origin: Native

Livestock Grazing Value: Poor

Description: 8 to 28 inches tall. Branching stems. Leaves and sheaths covered with long hairs. Seedhead an open panicle that breaks off and blows away or becomes a tickle grass up your pant leg.

Wildlife Value: Seed consumed by birds.

Habitat: A weedy grass found along roadsides and disturbed sites.



Common Name: **Yellow bluestem**

Specific Name: *Bothriochloa ischaemum*

Other Names: Old World Bluestem, King Ranch Bluestem.

Season of Growth: Warm

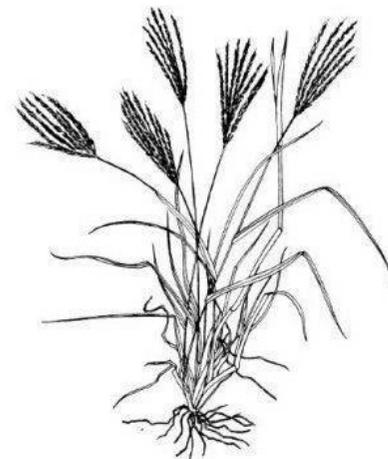
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Value: Fair-Good

Description: Grows in multistemmed clumps up to 3 feet tall. Stems sometimes decumbent at base. Leaves glabrous with few hairs at collar. Panicle digitate (like a finger) with 2 to 8 branches. Palatable to livestock early before stem elongation.

Wildlife Value: Little value except for cover by small mammals.

Habitat: Found on many soil types. Invades roadsides, pastures, and prairies. Invasive species in Kansas.



Warm-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Yellow bristlegrass**

Specific Name: *Setaria pumila*

Other Names: Yellow foxtail

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Value: Fair before seedhead emergence

Description: 8 to 48 inches tall. Scattered long hairs at leaf collar.

Similar to green bristlegrass except stems are flattened and purple at base. Dense erect cylindrical seedhead with numerous bristles.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by birds.

Habitat: Waste areas, roadsides, and overgrazed pastures.



Cool-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Canada wildrye**

Specific Name: *Elymus canadensis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 5 feet tall. Clasping auricles. Curved awns. Glumes v-shaped. Seedhead resembles wheat or barley that droops when mature. Palatable when young and green, but doesn't tolerate continuous grazing.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by big game animals before seedhead emerges. Provides nesting and winter cover for birds.

Habitat: Adapted to wide range of soil textures. Needs good moisture and is found commonly on roadsides and fence lines.



Common Name: **Downy brome**

Specific Name: *Bromus tectorum*

Other Names: Cheatgrass

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Cool

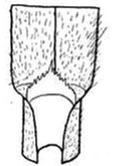
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Small bunchgrass 6 to 18 inches tall. Leaf blades and sheaths with soft woolly hairs. Open highly branched panicle with drooping brownish-red to purple spikelets at maturity. Prominent membranous often toothed ligule. Palatable to livestock for short time before head emergence.

Wildlife Value: New growth and seed used by many species.

Habitat: Found throughout the state on roadsides, pastures, and waste areas.



Common Name: **Foxtail barley**

Specific Name: *Hordeum jubatum*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

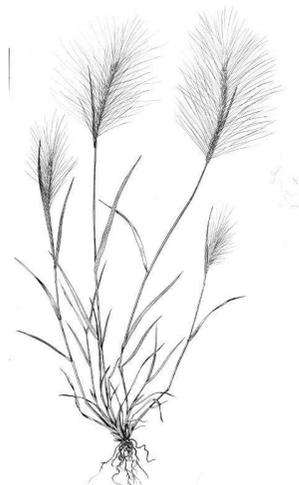
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor

Description: Bunchgrass 1 to 2 feet tall. Stems and sheaths glabrous to lightly pubescent. Short membranous ligule. Seedhead a spike-like raceme with lemma and glumes long-awned.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by small mammals.

Habitat: Waste areas, wetlands, subirrigated sites. Salt tolerant.



Cool-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Japanese brome**

Specific Name: *Bromus japonicus* or *Bromus arvensis*

Other Names: Field brome

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Small bunchgrass 12 to 30 inches tall. Leaf blades and sheaths densely hairy. Open often one-sided panicle. Awns often bent and twisted at maturity. Ligule somewhat rounded. Palatable to livestock in spring and fall.

Wildlife Value: Small mammals and birds eat the seeds.

Habitat: Found throughout the state on roadsides, disturbed areas, and rangeland.



Common Name: **Kentucky bluegrass**

Specific Name: *Poa pratensis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Sod forming with rhizomes. Height 18 to 30 inches. Leaves smooth with canoe-shaped tip. Open pyramid-shaped panicle. Palatable to cattle, horses and sheep.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by elk and deer. Seeds eaten by song birds and rodents.

Habitat: Found in all sites with favorable moisture including overgrazed and unburned pastures.



Common Name: **Little barley**

Specific Name: *Hordeum pusillum*

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Cool

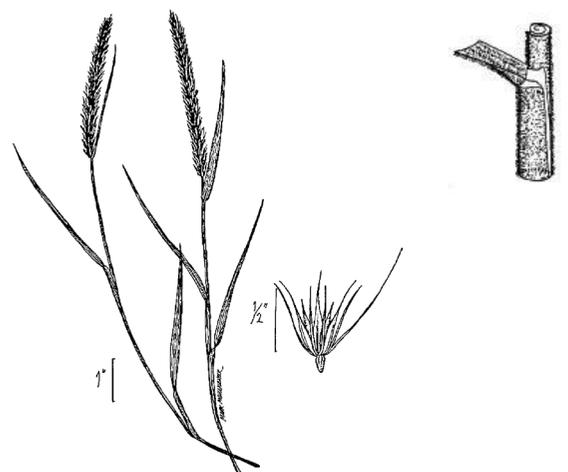
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor

Description: Small bunchgrass 5 to 15 inches tall. Leaf blades and sheaths densely hairy. Spikelike raceme. Ligule small. Somewhat palatable to livestock in spring and fall.

Wildlife Value: Seeds and leaves used by waterfowl and small mammals.

Habitat: Found throughout the state on especially dry disturbed sites.



Common Name: Needle and threadSpecific Name: *Hesperostipa comata*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

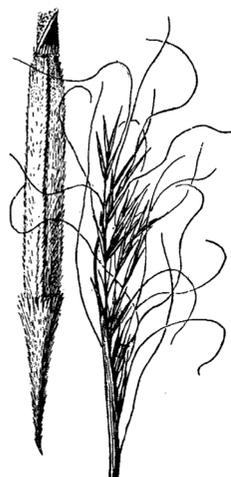
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair-Good

Description: Bunchgrass 12 to 40 inches tall. Stems densely tufted and glabrous. Leaf blades distinctly veined. Prominent ligule split or widely notched at top. One-flowered spikelet with twisted awns 4 to 8 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Small mammals and birds eat the seeds.

Habitat: Only found in a few western counties on loess breaks, sands, and sandy lowland.

**Common Name: Porcupinegrass**Specific Name: *Hesperostipa spartea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 4 feet tall. Long narrow leaves. Blades distinctly veined. Spikelets one-flowered with sharp-pointed awn 4 to 6 inches long. White glumes persist after spikelets detach. Membranous often split ligule. Palatable in vegetative stage, but awned seeds can cause injury if eaten by livestock.

Wildlife Value: Small mammals and birds eat the seeds.

Habitat: Found in the eastern half of Kansas on clay, loamy, and sandy sites.

**Common Name: Prairie Junegrass**Specific Name: *Koeleria macrantha*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

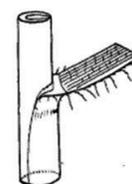
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Small bunchgrass 8 to 24 inches tall. Mostly basal leaves that tend to twist with maturity. Dense spikelike panicle. Leaf blades distinctly veined. Hair on sheaths and collar.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by deer. Seeds eaten by upland birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Found on upland sites with clay to sandy textures.



Cool-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Prairie wedgescale**

Specific Name: *Sphenopholis obtusata*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

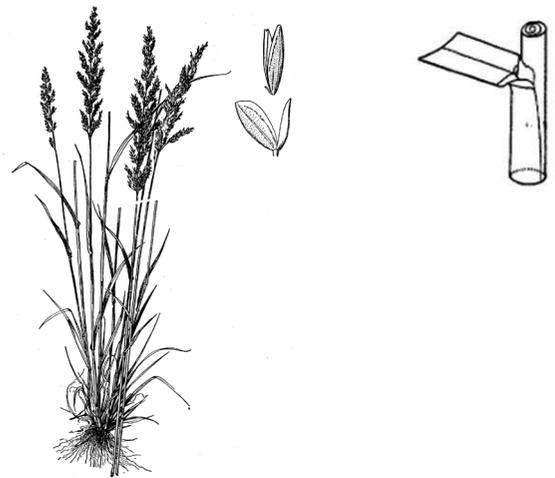
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Small bunchgrass 1 to 3 feet tall. Dense spikelike panicle. Membranous ligule with a jagged top. Resembles Prairie Junegrass, but leaves are greener and more lax.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by upland birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Found throughout the state on prairies, marshes, and disturbed areas.



Common Name: **Reed canarygrass**

Specific Name: *Phalaris arundinacea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

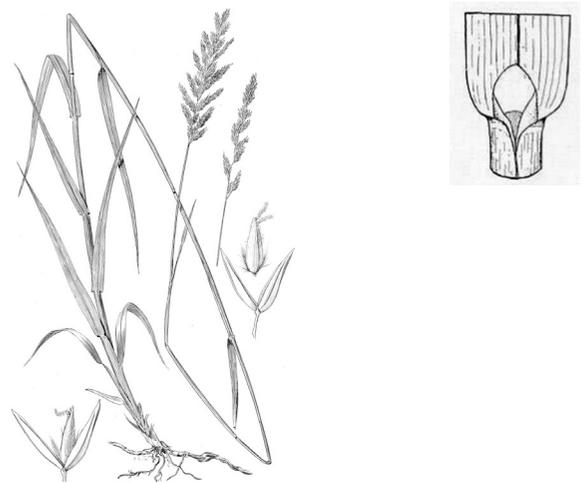
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair-Good

Description: Sod-forming rhizomatous species 6 to 8 feet tall. Coarse erect leaves. Distinct ligule. Stems, leaves, and sheath glabrous. Compact, narrow panicle. Vegetative growth palatable. Can become weedy.

Wildlife Value: Good nesting cover. Seeds eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Scattered around state on wetlands subject to flooding. Can be invasive.



Common Name: **Scribner's rosette grass**

Specific Name: *Dichanthelium oligosanthes*

Other Names: Scribner panicum

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Small bunchgrass 10 to 25 inches tall. Leaves 2 to 5 inches long and 1/4 to 1/2 inch wide. Leaves and sheath hairy. One side of leaf blade wavy. Open panicle.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by deer. Seeds eaten by upland birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Found on many sites in the eastern three quarters of the state.



Common Name: Sixweeks fescueSpecific Name: *Vulpia octoflora*

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Poor

Description: Small bunchgrass 4 to 20 inches tall. Leaves narrow and rolled. Narrow compact panicle. Plants turn brown quickly.

Wildlife Value: Seeds eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Widely distributed on bare soils.

**Common Name: Squirreltail**Specific Name: *Elymus elymoides*

Other Names: Bottlebrush squirreltail

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Bunchgrass 6 to 18 inches tall. Narrow blades. Auricles can vary from short to long. Seedhead is an erect cylindrical spike.

Wildlife Value: Poor cover for birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Primarily found in the western third of state on dry upland sites.

**Common Name: Virginia wildrye**Specific Name: *Elymus virginicus*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

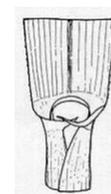
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 3 feet tall. Similar to Canada wildrye, but has straight awns, U-shaped glumes, and an erect seedhead. Palatable in spring and fall.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by deer. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds.

Habitat: Found primarily on heavier moist soils, along fencelines and open woodlands. Shade tolerant.



Cool-Season Grasses

Common Name: **Western wheatgrass**

Specific Name: *Pascopyrum smithii*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

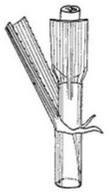
Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Good

Description: Sod-forming rhizomatous species 1 to 3 feet tall. Leaves bluish-green with prominent veins. Usually with clasping auricles. Seed spikes 2 to 6 inches long. The early spring growth and regrowth in fall is palatable.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Primarily found on heavy clay soils and tolerates saline sites. Can exist in sandy soils.



Common Name: **Wilcox panicum**

Specific Name: *Dichanthelium wilcoxianum*

Other Names: Fall rosette grass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Fair

Description: Small bunchgrass 4 to 14 inches tall. Stems covered with hair. Leaves erect and sharp pointed. Somewhat similar to Scribner's rosette grass, but has more hair and narrower leaves.

Wildlife Value: Grazed by deer, especially in winter. Seed eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Found on a wide range of soil textures, but less common than Scribner's rosette grass.



Common Name: **Winter bentgrass**

Specific Name: *Agrostis hyemalis*

Other Names: Ticklegrass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Native

Livestock Value: Produces minimal desirable forage.

Description: Small bunchgrass 8 to 24 inches tall. Short almost threadlike leaves. Sheaths and leaf blades glabrous. Seedhead an open panicle purplish in color. Seedhead breaks off and tumbles away.

Wildlife Value: Winter grazing for wildlife.

Habitat: Disturbed sites and moist meadows.



Pasture Grasses

Common Name: **Bermudagrass**

Specific Name: *Cynodon dactylon*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 4 to 20 inches tall with both stolons and rhizomes.

Leaf blades flat or folded with conspicuous ring of white hair at margins of ligule. Seedheads are single fingerlike whorl of one-sided spikes.

Wildlife Value: Birds and small animals eat seed.

Habitat: Responds well to fertilizer. Good salt tolerance. Sprigged or seeded in pastures.



Common Name: **Crabgrass**

Specific Name: *Digitaria sanguinalis*

Other Names: Hairy crabgrass

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Warm

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 15 to 24 inches tall. Stems much branched, spreading, often purplish in color, and rooting at nodes along decumbent base. Leaf blades and sheaths hairy. Seedheads have a few to several fingerlike spikes.

Wildlife Value: Poor for nesting or cover. Doves eat seeds.

Habitat: Grows well under hot, dry conditions on sandy to silty loam soils. 'Red River' and 'Quick-N-Big' crabgrass are varieties that are seeded and used as pasture grasses.



Common Name: **Creeping foxtail**

Specific Name: *Alopecurus arundinaceus*

Other Names: Creeping meadow foxtail

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

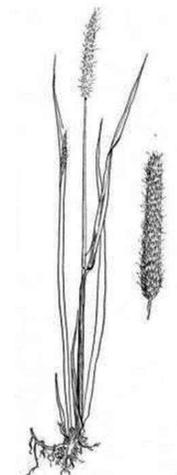
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: Sod-forming rhizomatous species 3 to 4 feet tall. Flat green leaves. Cylindrical spikelike seedhead that turns blackish upon maturity.

Wildlife Value: Forage consumed by deer. Good cover and nesting for birds.

Habitat: Used in irrigated pasture. Tolerates flooding. Responds well to fertilizer.



Pasture Grasses

Common Name: **Intermediate wheatgrass**

Specific Name: *Thinopyrum intermedium*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair-Good

Description: 3 to 4 feet tall with rhizomes. Little hair except on leaf margins. Leaves green to blue-green in color. Seed spikes 4 to 8 inches long. Pubescent wheatgrass is now considered as the same species, but as the name implies, the spikelets and leaves are densely covered with hairs.

Wildlife Value: Birds and small animals eat seed.

Habitat: Grows best on well-drained loam to clay-textured soils. Best used as solid seeded stands under irrigation.



Common Name: **Italian ryegrass**

Specific Name: *Lolium perenne* ssp. multiflorum

Life Cycle: Annual

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass 2 to 3 feet tall. Long narrow mostly basal leaves. Auricles present. Spikelets with awns. Spikelets edgewise on seedhead. Perennial ryegrass is a similar species, but usually does not have awns on spikelets.

Wildlife Value: Seed eaten by birds.

Habitat: Adapted to wide range of soils. Provides quick cover for temporary pasture, for erosion control, and can be overseeded into introduced warm-season grasses to extend grazing season.



Common Name: **Meadow brome**

Specific Name: *Bromus biebersteinii*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass with short rhizomes. 20 to 40 inches tall. Light green leaves. Upper surface of blades pubescent. Open panicle

Wildlife Value: Foliage grazed by deer.

Habitat: Grows best on fertile, moderately deep, well-drained soils. Sensitive to flooding. Planted in irrigated pasture.



Common Name: Orchardgrass

Specific Name: *Dactylis glomerata*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

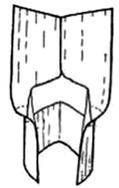
Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: 1½ to 4 feet tall bunchgrass with flat stems. Immature leaves are folded, becoming flat, long, and sharply pointed.

Leaf margins and sheaths rough to the touch. Has prominent membranous ligule. Seedhead is a panicle with spikelets tightly clustered on one side of the branches.

Wildlife Value: Deer graze forage. Nesting and cover for pheasants and other birds. Birds and small mammals eat seeds.

Habitat: Lawns, wooded areas, meadows, and commonly seeded in irrigated pastures.



Common Name: Redtop

Specific Name: *Agrostis stolonifera*

Other names: Creeping bentgrass

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

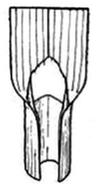
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair-Good

Description: 1½ to 4 feet tall with rhizomes. Sheaths glabrous. Leaf margins finely barbed. Membranous ligule. Pyramid-shaped seedhead purplish-red when flowering.

Wildlife Value: Deer graze forage. Nesting and cover for birds. Birds eat seeds.

Habitat: Found primarily in eastern Kansas on wetland meadows.



Common Name: Russian wildrye

Specific Name: *Psathyrostachys juncea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

Description: Bunchgrass 15 to 30 inches tall. Mostly basal leaves 6 to 18 inches long. Well-developed auricles. Seedhead an erect short spike about 4 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Deer graze forage. Seed eaten by birds and small mammals.

Habitat: Adapted to dry areas on silt loam to clay soils but can be produced under irrigation.



Pasture Grasses

Common Name: **Smooth brome**

Specific Name: *Bromus inermis*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Good

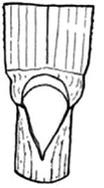
Description: Sod-forming rhizomatous species 1½ to 4 feet tall.

Most of plant usually glabrous, but can have hairs on lower leaf near collar. Leaf blade with a conspicuous “W” constriction.

Somewhat open panicle that turns brownish with maturity.

Wildlife Value: Forage for big game.

Habitat: Prominent in northeast Kansas, but can be found throughout state along roadsides and ditches. Used for pastures on both dryland and under irrigation.



Common Name: **Tall fescue**

Specific Name: *Schedonorus arundinaceus* or *Festuca arundinacea*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair-Good

Description: 1½ to 4 feet tall with rhizomes. Sheaths glabrous. Leaf margins finely barbed. Membranous ligule. Pyramid-shaped seedhead purplish-red when flowering.

Wildlife Value: Deer graze forage. Nesting and cover for birds. Birds eat seeds.

Habitat: Found primarily in eastern Kansas on wetland meadows. Old varieties associated with endophyte toxicity. Novel endophyte varieties available.



Common Name: **Timothy**

Specific Name: *Phleum pratense*

Life Cycle: Perennial

Season of Growth: Cool

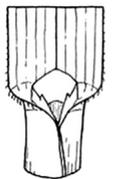
Origin: Introduced

Livestock Grazing Value: Fair-Good

Description: Bunchgrass 20 to 40 inches tall. Leaves and sheaths glabrous. Prominent ligule. Dense spikelike seedhead 2 to 6 inches long.

Wildlife Value: Good forage for deer. Nesting cover for birds.

Habitat: Found primarily in eastern Kansas and elsewhere on moist soils. Reputation as good hay for horses.



Definition of Terms

Annual – plant completes life cycle in 1 year, reproducing by seed.

Auricle – ear-shaped lobes located where the leaf blade and sheath come together.

Awn – bristlelike growth on end or back of a structure.

Blade – part of the grass leaf above the sheath.

Bristles – short stiff hair.

Bunchgrass – grows in a tuft without stolons or rhizomes.

Bur – rough, prickly covering of a floret.

Collar – portion of the leaf where the sheath and leaf join.

Cool-season – growth occurs during the cooler months of the year, i.e. spring and fall.

Decumbent – from a prostrate or inclined position.

Digitate – like fingers arising from a point of origin.

Dioecious – having male and female organs on separate individuals.

Fibrous – consisting of fibers as in a root system.

Floret – individual grass flower consisting of lemma, palea, and seed.

Glabrous – without hairs.

Glossy – having a shiny surface.

Glumes – pair of bracts at the base of the spikelet.

Habitat – a place or environment where a plant lives.

Inflorescence – the entire flowering part of the grass plant.

Internode – portion of the stem between the joints (nodes).

Introduced – grasses brought in from outside of North America.

Keeled – folded like the back of a leaf.

Lemma – lower bract of the grass floret enclosing the seed.

Ligule – a membrane or row of hairs lying crosswise on the inner or upper side of a leaf at the collar.

Membranous – consisting of a thin, somewhat transparent, soft tissue.

Midrib – the central vein of a leaf.

Native – grasses that occurred in North America before European settlement.

Node – joint on a stalk where the sheath is joined to the stem.

Palatable – attribute of the plant that causes selection by the animal.

Palea – upper bract of grass floret enclosing the seed.

Panicle – open branching type of inflorescence with pediceled spikelets (e.g. switchgrass).

Pasture – more intensively managed land for the production of adapted, introduced or native species in pure stands or mixtures.

Pedicel – the stalk of an individual spikelet of an inflorescence.

Perennial – lasting more than 2 years.

Pubescent – covered with short, soft hairs.

Raceme – type of inflorescence with each spikelet pediceled.

Rachis – central stalk of a spike or spikelike raceme.

Rangeland – land uncultivated because of climate, soil, and topography; natural vegetation consists of grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

Rhizome – underground stem with nodes, scalelike leaves and internodes.

Seedhead – flowering part of the plant that contains the seeds.

Serrated – having a jagged sawlike edge.

Sheath – the lower part of the leaf that envelops the stem.

Sod-forming – creating a dense mat.

Spike – elongated inflorescence with the spikelets sessile on the rachis.

Spikelet – a unit of the grass inflorescence containing glumes and one or more florets.

Spine – stiff sharp-pointed outgrowth.

Stolon – above ground runner which can take root at the nodes.

Tuft – a bunch or collection of tissue held or growing together at the base.

Warm-season – growth occurs primarily during the warmer months of the year.

Whorl – several branches or leaves arising from a node.

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Koeleria macrantha 17
- L**
Leptoloma cognata 3
Little barley 16
Little bluestem 6
Lolium perenne ssp.
 multiflorum 22
- M**
Marsh bristlegrass 6
Mat sandbur 10
Meadow brome 22
Muhlenbergia cuspidata 7
- N**
Needle and thread 17
- O**
Old World Bluestem 13
Orchardgrass 23
- P**
Panicum capillare 13
Panicum obtusum 12
Panicum virgatum 11
Pascopyrum smithii 20
Paspalum floridanum 4
Phalaris arundinacea 18
Phleum pratense 24
Phragmites australis 3
Phragmites communis 3
Plains muhly 7
Poa pratensis 16
Porcupinegrass 17
Prairie cordgrass 7
Prairie dropseed 7
Prairie Junegrass 17
Prairie sandreed 8
Prairie threeawn 8
Prairie wedgescale 18
Psathyrostachys juncea 23
Purple lovegrass 8
Purple threeawn 9
Purpletop 9
Purple tridens 9
- R**
Redtop 23
Reed canarygrass 18
Ripgut 7
Russian wildrye 23
- S**
Saltgrass 5
Sand bluestem 9
- Sandbur 10
Sand dropseed 10
Sand lovegrass 10
Schedonnardus paniculatus 12
Schedonorus arundinaceus 24
Schizachyrium scoparium 6
Scribner panicum 18
Scribner's rosette grass 18
Setaria parviflora 6
Setaria pumila 14
Setaria viridis 4
Sideoats grama 11
Silver beardgrass 11
Silver bluestem 11
Sixweeks fescue 19
Sloughgrass 7
Smooth brome 24
Sorghastrum nutans 5
Sorghum halepense 6
Spartina pectinata 7
Sphenopholis obtusata 18
Sporobolus airoides 1
Sporobolus compositus 12
Sporobolus cryptandrus 10
Sporobolus heterolepis 7
Squirreltail 19
Switchgrass 11
- T**
Tall dropseed 12
Tall fescue 24
Thinopyrum intermedium 22
Ticklegrass 20
Timothy 24
Tridens flavus 9
Tripsacum dactyloides 3
Tumblegrass 12
Tumble windmill grass 13
- V**
Vine mesquite 12
Virginia wildrye 19
Vulpia octoflora 19
- W**
Western wheatgrass 20
Wilcox panicum 20
Windmillgrass 13
Winter bentgrass 20
Witchgrass 13
- Y**
Yellow bluestem 13
Yellow bristlegrass 14
Yellow foxtail 14

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