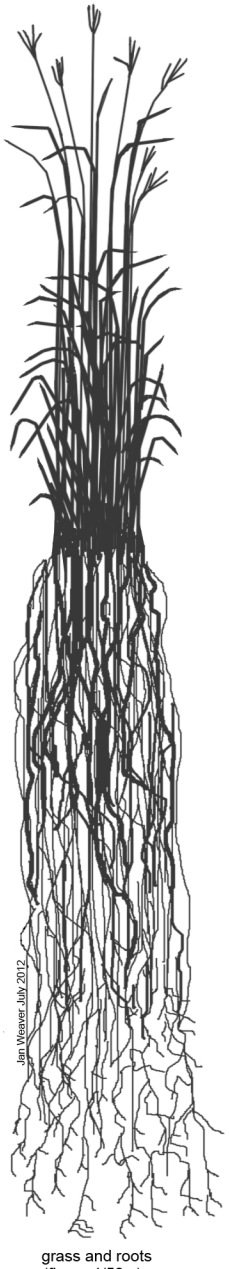
Big Bluestem

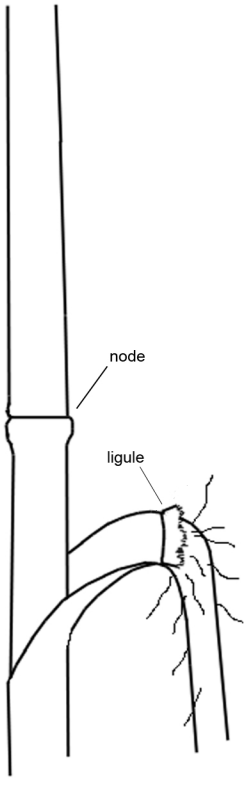
Andropogon gerardii

Grow Native - https://grownative.org/native_plants/big-bluestem/
Wildflower.org - https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=ange

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

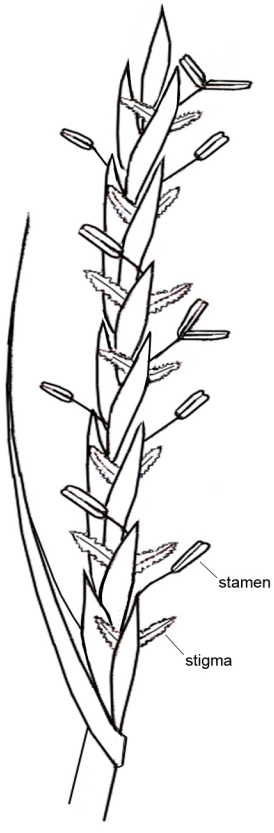


grass and roots
(figure 1/50 x)



stalk (gray-green or purple) with grass blade pulled down to show ligule and hairs (ligules are different for each kind of grass)
(figure 1.5 x)

raceme (tan) with 24 spikelets (including 2 small spikelets at the top)
(figure 1.5 x)



stamens (yellow) release pollen, feathery stigmas (purple) capture pollen
(figure 1.5 x)

Coloring Guide

leaves and stems gray-green to bluish with purple patches, especially around nodes reddish after the first frost

Size

above ground: flower stalks up to 9 ft (3 m), below ground: roots about as long as plant is tall, spread 2 to 3 ft. (6 to 1 m), racemes up to 6" (2.4 cm)

Connections

Nicknamed "icecream grass" because bison and cattle like it so much (due to a low silica content). It is a potential biofuel. Another name for it is "turkey foot" because the seed heads at the top of the stalk look like a turkey foot.

What Eats Big Bluestem

bison, cattle, prairie and meadow voles, skipper butterflies, thrips grasshoppers, leafhoppers seeds eaten by sparrows roots consumed by fungi, nematodes and soil arthropods

What Big Bluestem needs

sunlight, carbon dioxide from the air, water and minerals (N, P, K and others) from the soil

Family Relations

Andropogon gerardii is in the **Andropogon Genus** (clump forming),**Poaceae Family** (grasses, grows from the base), **Poales Order** (wind pollinated, starchy seeds), **Monocot Class** (narrow-leaved),**Magnoliophyta Division** (has flowers), and **Plant Kingdom** (makes its own food, doesn't move).

North American Distribution

Habitat (home, food, water)

prairies, savannas, open woods, glades, along railroad tracks

Home

full sun,
moist to slightly dry
fertile loam or
clay loam, sand
or gravel