

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Cape May Plant Materials Center
Cape May Courthouse, New Jersey

**NOTICE OF RELEASE OF SUTHER PRAIRIE GERmplasm LITTLE
BLUESTEM**

SOURCE-IDENTIFIED CLASS OF NATURAL GERmplasm

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture announces the release of a source-identified ecotype of little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash).

As a source identified release, this plant will be referred to as Suther Germplasm little bluestem. It has been assigned the *NRCS* accession number 9082317. Suther Germplasm little bluestem is released as a source identified type of certified seed.

This alternative release procedure is justified because this genetic material was collected from a remnant eastern piedmont prairie. Development threats, long history, and significant size of the Suther Farm makes this an important ecological and cultural asset.

Collection Site Information: , Suther Prairie little bluestem was collected from a wet prairie 27 miles Northeast of Charlotte NC in the floodplain of the Dutch Buffalo Creek a tributary of the Rocky River at about 680 feet above sea level. Cabarrus County NC, 27 miles northeast of Charlotte NC is in the piedmont of North Carolina; plant hardiness zone 7a; 114-139 cm (45-55 inches) of precipitation per year with a mean July temperature of 26.1 C (79 F) and a mean January temperature of 5.5 degrees C. (42 degrees F.)

Ecotype Description: Little bluestem is a medium tall, native perennial warm-season bunch grass with coarse stems and basal leaves. It is easily mistaken for common broomsedge, which is lower in forage value. Little bluestem plants are 1½ to 5 feet tall, erect, and slender to robust, with compressed stems. They have flat bluish basal shoots, which are somewhat bulbous at the bottom. Plants are green, but are often purplish at the base of the stem and entire plants have reddish cast after frost. Leaves are nearly hairless except for a small tuft at the junction of sheath and blade, and tend to fold with maturity. Seed heads are in the form of racemes about 3 inches long. The raceme stems are hairy. Little bluestem develops full stands where moisture is sufficient, but gets clumpy on drier sites. It has value as a persistent low-maintenance cover plant and as a summer forage plant.

Ecological Considerations and Evaluation: An environmental evaluation (attached) was done as directed by policy. There are no limitations or cautions on its use.

Anticipated Conservation Use: Suther Prairie Germplasm Little Bluestem is recommended for roadside revegetation, critical areas, wildlife habitat, parks, recreational areas, landscapes, and prairie restoration.

Little bluestem can provide hay and forage to all classes of livestock. Its forage rates good to excellent if plants are utilized in the leafy stage and before seed head emergence. It is an important part of prairie pastures and is considered a long-lived perennial.

Potential Area of Adaptation: This release is recommended for planting throughout the Mid-Atlantic area of the Eastern U.S.

Availability of Plant Materials: Original germplasm material may be obtained through the Cape May Plant Materials Center, 1536 Route 9 North, Cape May Courthouse, NJ 08210. Phone: (609) 465-5901 FAX: (609) 465-9284.

References:

Hitchcock, **A.S.**, *Manual of the Grasses of the United States*. 1950. USDA Misc. Publ. 200. Revised 1951

Estep, Bret and McRae, Catherine. *Prairie Restoration and Management Plan, Suther Farm Prairie*. University of N.C. at Charlotte. Unpublished report. 1997, Revised 1999

Prepared by: Christopher Miller, Regional Plant Specialist, Somerset, NJ

Signatures for release of:

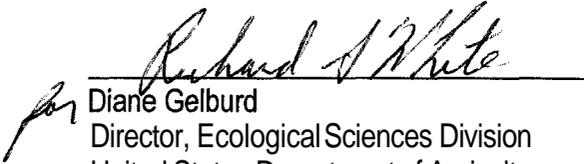
Suther Germplasm Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



Thomas Drewes
Acting State Conservationist
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Somerset, NJ

5-2-02

Date



Diane Gelburd
Director, Ecological Sciences Division
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington, D.C.

7/6/02

Date