

Big Bluestem

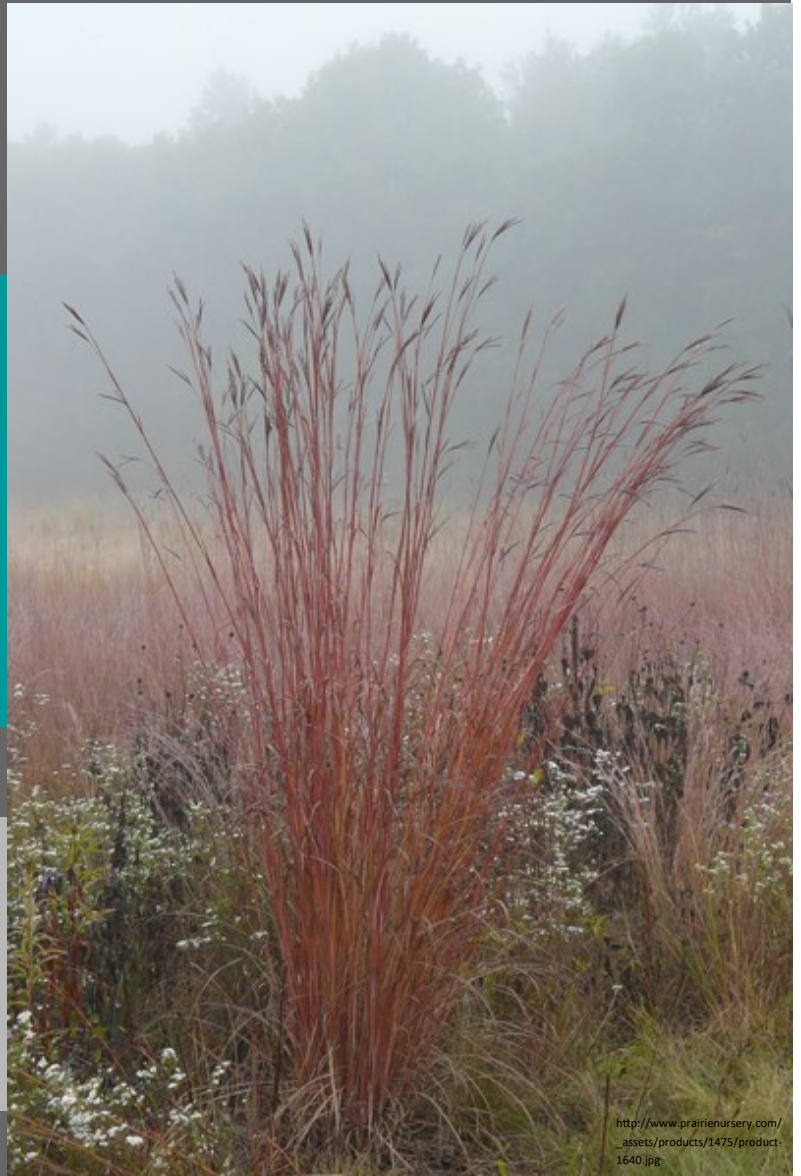
(Andropogon gerardii)

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Big bluestem starts out a blue-green color and turns red-tan later in the season. This grass can reach 6-8 feet, dominating the landscape. Seed heads have three spikelets that look like a turkey foot. The grass spreads by seeds or rhizomes (a horizontal underground stem that produces shoots at an interval.) It is so tasty to cattle that some farmers have called it ice cream for cattle.

Big bluestem doesn't reach its full height until mid-summer. This gives time for the early forbs and grasses to develop before bluestem takes over.



Big Bluestem Quick Facts:

- Classification: Grass
- Life Cycle: Perennial
- Flower Color: purple, pink, red
- Bloom Time: June-August

- ◆ Settlers realized corn grew the best where there was an abundance of Big Bluestem.
- ◆ Dominant grass in tallgrass prairies.