

NATIVE PERENNIALS

Blazing Star, Dotted

Liatris punctata

Native. Produces attractive purple flower spikes in late summer. Often seen on dry, sandy, or gravelly soil. Grows on hillsides. Has a deep taproot. Grows 1 ft tall.



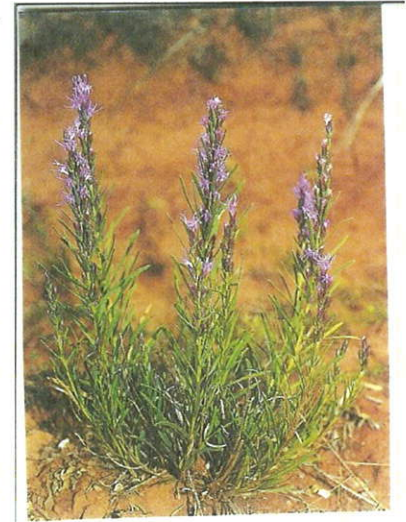
Description: These showy native forbs are slender, unbranched plants from 8 to 40 inches tall, depending on species and growing conditions. All arise from thickened corn-like rootstocks. The purple flower heads, produced from August to October, are comprised entirely of disk flowers. Leaves are numerous, alternate, linear, sessile, entire, and variously rough or gland-dotted. Six species occur in South Dakota.

Distribution/Habitat: Dotted gayfeather is mostly smooth. Leaves are stiff, overlapping, arching upward, and covered with numerous dots or glands. Inflorescences are spike-like with cylindric to bell-shaped flower heads. Plants arise from a deep taproot. Dotted gayfeather is found in the drier plains and hills of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, south to Texas and Arizona. It is drought resistant and adapted to a variety of upland prairies. It is found throughout South Dakota, and is the most abundant *Liatris* in the northern Great Plains. It frequently is abundant and provides an impressive and showy display of prairie beauty.

Comments: As a group, *Liatris* is readily grazed by livestock and wild grazers. Excessive grazing greatly decreases their abundance. *Liatris*, especially the roots, has long been used medically by Plains Indians. Although tribes did not use all the same species, some general uses are recognized. These include treatments for skin inflammation, wounds, swelling, bloody urine and bladder trouble, gonorrhea, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Some *Liatris* species roots were used as food by some tribes. However, because of extreme variation within and between species and a lack of knowledge about their specific chemical makeup, gayfeather roots should not be eaten. These plants, which are native only to prairies and other open areas in North America, are recognized as attractive yard and bouquet ornamentals. When in bouquets assembled by florists, it is ironic that they are probably grown in European greenhouses. Butterflies flock to the nectar.

Credit: James E. Johnson & Gary E. Larson, Grassland Plants of South Dakota and the Northern Great Plains. SDSU, Brookings, SD. B-566 (Rev.) August 1999. Page 128.

Photo Credit: Jim Johnson, SDSU Ag Experiment Station, Brookings, SD and USDA/NRCS Plant Materials Center



Jim Johnson, SDSU Ag Experiment Station

