

GRASSES

Grama, Blue 'Bad River' Ecotype

Bouteloua gracilis 'Bad River'

Native. Short, drought tolerant plants produce interesting “eyebrow” seedheads. Use as garden accent, edging plant, or for low maintenance turf. Grows 4-12” tall



Description: This short, warm-season perennial is sod-like, spreading from basal tillers. Plants range from 4 to 18 inches tall. Seed heads each bear 1 to 3 comb-shaped, one sided spicate branches, bluish-purple when young, straw-colored when mature. In contrast to sideoats grama and hairy grama, blue grama leaf blades are nearly without hairs, having none along the leaf margins.

Distribution/Habitat: Blue grama is native throughout the Great Plains and Southwest, extending from the Canadian prairie provinces to Mexico. It reaches greatest prominence on drier sites. In the northern Great Plains, blue grama is best adapted to medium and fine textured, relatively deep soils of rolling uplands.

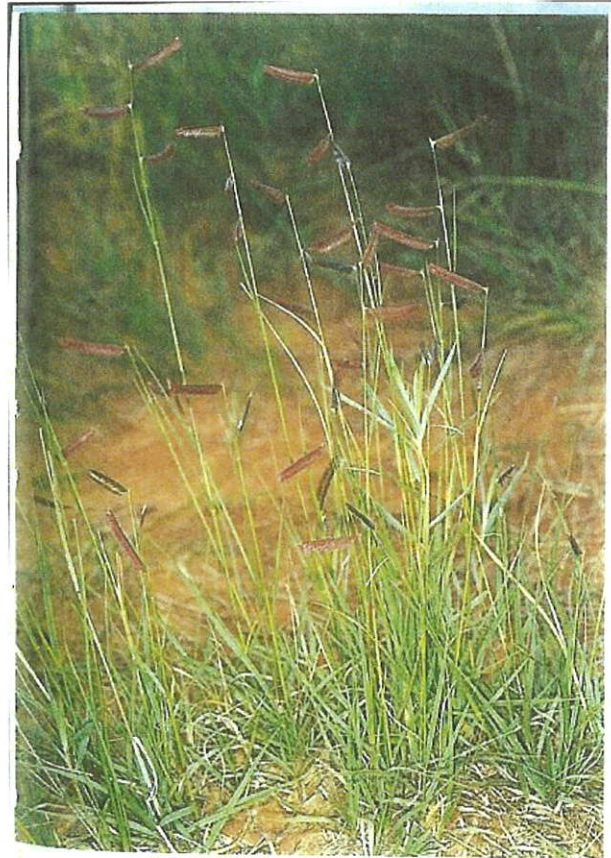
Comments: Blue grama is a common associate of buffalograss, sideoats grama, and western wheatgrass. It can create shortgrass sod with grazing pressure, replacing more productive mid and tallgrasses, often eventually giving way to buffalograss. Although normally low in productivity, it is nutritious and palatable to stock and wildlife. Regionally, blue grama is finding some favor for mixtures with buffalograss in low maintenance lawns. Blue grama can be confused with its hairy relative, **Hairy grama** (*B. hirsute*) which differs in having a needle-like projection of the spicate branch beyond the spikelet-bearing portion. Unlike blue grama, hairy grama has stiff hairs on the leaf blade margins. Leaves curl as plants cure. Hairy grama is an occupant of dry, sandy, and shallow soils.

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 22.

Photo Credit: USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center & SDSU Ag Experiment Station



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