

GRASSES

Indiangrass ‘Tomahawk’

Sorghastrum nutans ‘Tomahawk’

Native. Major component of tall grass prairie. Grows best on moist soil. Produces seeds in large, fluffy terminal panicles. Interesting landscape plant.

Grows 3-6 ft tall.

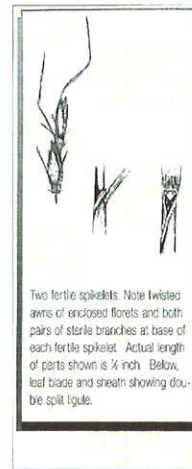
Description: Indiangrass is a warm-season, perennial tallgrass, 2 to 6 feet, made bunchy with short rhizomes. Rather dense, golden-yellowish, lance-shaped panicles are 4 to 12 inches long on erect culms. Leaves are rather stiff and straight, arising from the stems at acute angles. Prominent vertical projections are located on both sides of the ligule. Leaves are lighter green than those of big bluestem, a common associate.

Distribution/Habitat: Indiangrass is found in southeast Canada, through much of the central and eastern United States, and into Mexico. It is absent west of the Great Plains. It is most commonly associated with big bluestem in deep soils of the eastern Great Plains. In South Dakota it occurs in the east, in the Sandhills of the southwest, and occasionally in Black Hills foothills.

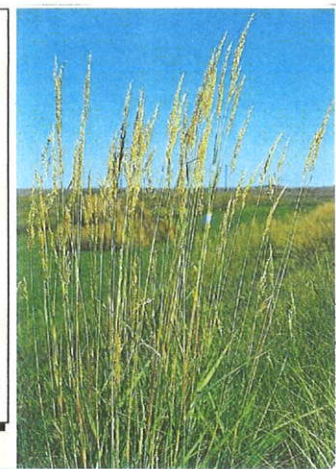
Comments: Indiangrass is a favorite native forage of grazing livestock and makes excellent hay if cut before flower stalks develop, producing almost as much forage as big bluestem. In recent years it has been seeded in mixtures with other native tallgrasses in eastern fields for erosion control, grazing, and grassland restoration. Adapted cultivars are ‘Holt’ and ‘Tomahawk.’ Seeds are used sparingly by upland game birds, finches, juncos, and field and tree sparrows. Meadow and pocket mice make some use of seed. The Lakota name for Indiangrass translates to “red grass with fluffy light-colored end.”

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 66.

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



Two fertile spikelets. Note twisted awns of enclosed florets and both pairs of sterile branches at base of each fertile spikelet. Actual length of parts shown is 1/4 inch. Below, leaf blade and sheath showing double split ligule.



SDSU Ag Experiment Station

