

GRASSES

Grama, Sideoats 'Pierre'

Bouteloua curtipendula 'Pierre'

Native. Leafy, sod-forming midgrass. Seeds hang along one side of the flower stalks, adding landscape appeal. Produces bright orange pollen. Interesting garden plant. Grows 8-24" tall



Description: This midgrass is a warm-season, moderately rhizomatous perennial, commonly 8 to 24 inches tall. Its distinctive inflorescence consists of short one-sided spikes, 1/4 to 5/8 inch long, which hang downward along one side of the flower stalk. Leaf blades are normally flat with stiff hairs along the edges. With curing, basal leaves curl and dry brownish-white. The entire plant may take on a light reddish appearance late in the summer and fall.

Distribution/Habitat: Sideoats grama occurs naturally from Maine to Montana and into central Mexico, absent only in the Northwest and Southeast. In the northern Great Plains it is found in many upland plant communities, often with western wheatgrass, blue grama, or little bluestem. It is especially common on weakly developed, calcareous, and fine textured soils.

Comments: Sideoats grama takes its name from the one-sided spikes which appear to hang from the seed stalk along one side. Although it is a sod-forming grass, the short, scaly rhizomes often give plants a bunched appearance. Sideoats grama is relished by livestock and grazing wildlife. Where it grows in association with little bluestem, sideoats grama usually increases with grazing pressure, but with prolonged heavy grazing it may give way to blue grama and/or increasing or invading forbs. It is not as drought tolerant as blue grama. Upland birds feed on sideoats grama seed. It is commonly used in seed mixtures to restore native rangelands. Regionally adapted varieties include 'Butte,' 'Pierre,' and 'Killdeer.'

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 20.

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