



MASTER GARDENER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Native Plants



Reading / Reference Materials

CSU Extension Fact Sheets

- #7.242 Native Herbaceous Perennials
- #7.421 Native Trees
- #7.422 Native Shrubs

Web: Visit the CSUCE Gilpin County, CMG “Mountain Gardening” web site at www.coopext.colostate.edu/gilpinmg

Review Questions

1. List five benefits of using native plants in the landscape.
2. What soil amendments should be used for growing native plants?
3. Why are aspens not recommended for planting in Front Range cities?
4. Why is it hard to find native plants in nurseries/garden centers?
5. All native plants can survive on natural rain and snowfall in your yard. True or False?
Explain your answer.

Native Plants Curriculum developed Irene Shonle, PhD.

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CMG GardenNotes #581

Native Grasses

For Use In Colorado Landscapes

Why use native grasses?

- Bunchgrasses can be used ornamentally as specimens or in groups.
- Sod forming grasses can make great low maintenance turf and offer savings in mowing, fertilizing and irrigation.
- Grasses provide excellent forage and cover for birds and beneficial insects.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Season	Height	Planting Elevation	Notes
<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i> (<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>)	Indian rice grass	Cool	12-24"	To 9,000'	Delicate, lacy bunchgrass with attractive showy panicles. Very low water use. Short lived. Edible seeds. Most well-drained soils.
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Big bluestem	Warm	48-72"	To 7,500'	Robust bunchgrass with upright growth. Turns red-burgundy in the fall with color retention well into winter. Tolerates most soils (esp. clay) and water regimes.
<i>Andropogon saccharoides</i>	Silver beard grass	Warm	24-48"	To 7,500'	Bunchgrass with fine textured leaves and large seed heads which catch the light and persist through the winter. Orange fall color. Grows in all soils, including clay. Low water use.
<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	Sideoats grama	Warm	24-36"	To 9,000'	Bunchgrass with small pennant- like seeds on one side of stem. Very low water use. Most well-drained soils.
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	Blue grama, eyelash grass	Warm	6-20"	To 9,500'	Bunchgrass with large curved flowering spikes that resemble eyelashes. Excellent lawn alternative. Withstands moderate traffic and light shade. Low water use;
<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	Buffalo grass	Warm	2-8"	To 6,500'	Sod-forming grass, moderate to low water use. Long-lived with a vigorous root system. Prefers clay soils.
<i>Eragrostis trichodes</i>	Sand lovegrass	Warm	24-48"	To 6,500'	Bunchgrass with a lacy, airy inflorescence. Does especially well on sandy soils, but tolerates most. Low water use.
<i>Festuca arizonica</i>	Arizona fescue	Cool	10-24"	To 10,000' or higher	Graceful clumping bunchgrass with fine-textured blue-green leaves. Low water use. Tolerates light shade but not traffic.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Season	Height	Planting Elevation	Notes
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	June grass	Cool	12-24"	TO 11,000'	Bunchgrass with attractive open panicles of flowers. Great mixed with low-growing perennials. Low water use but will tolerate wetter sites. Most soils and light shade.
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i> (<i>Agropyron smithii</i>)	Western wheatgrass	Cool	12-40"	To 10,500'	Sod-forming grass with upright blue leaves and spikes. Most soils. Because it is strongly rhizomatous, it should be used only where there is adequate growing space.
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Switchgrass	Warm	36-48"	To 7,000 (maybe higher)	Slow sod-former with upright growth, vase shaped. Many delicate panicles, high above the foliage in some strains, turn reddish-bronze in the autumn. Often used at the back of the perennial border or as a tall screen.
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> (<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>)	Little bluestem	Warm	12-48"	To 7,500 or higher	Upright growing bunchgrass with green to blue-green leaves and fluffy seed heads that catch the light, persisting through winter. Fall color is a red to bronze, which fades slowly in winter. Sun. Good for clay soils, but tolerates most. Low to moderate water use.
<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Alkali sacaaton	Warm	36-60"	To 7,500'	Striking robust grass with fine textured bluish leaves and a showy, airy, open inflorescence. Low water use, tolerates most soils. Easy to establish.
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	Indian grass	Warm	36-60"	To 6,500'	One of the most ornamental of the native grasses. Upright growth with large tawny seed heads and golden-orange fall color. Moderate water use. Needs space to grow.

Season: Cool season grasses green up earlier in the spring and can go dormant and turn brown in the heat. Warm season grasses stay dormant longer in the spring, and grow during the warmer season.

Grasses prefer full sun unless stated otherwise in the notes section.

Author: Irene Shonle, Ph.D., Colorado State University Extension, Gilpin County

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GardenNotes #582

Native Plants Reference List

CSU Extension Fact Sheets

- Native trees #7.421
- Native shrubs #7.422
- Native Herbaceous Perennials #7.242

ID books

Ackerfield, J. Flora of Colorado. Brit Press. 2015

- Carter, J.M. Carter, D. Stevens and J. Bousselot. Common Southwestern Native Plants, third edition. Colorado Native Plant Society, 2018.
- Carter, J. and M. Leggit. *Trees and Shrubs of Colorado*. Johnson Books 1995.
- Carter, J. *Common Southwestern Native Plants: An Identification Guide*. Silver City, NM: Mimbres Publishing, 2003. (has some landscape uses, too)
- Guennel, G.K. *Guide to Colorado Wildflowers. Vols 1& 2*. Westcliffe Publishers 1995. Nelson, R.A. and R. Williams. *A guide to Rocky Mtn Plants, 5th Ed*. Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2002.
- Weber, William et al. *Flora of Colorado, Eastern Slope. 3rd Ed*. University Press of Colorado 2001.
- Weber, William et al. *Flora of Colorado, Western Slope. 3rd Ed*. University Press of Colorado 2001.
- *Weeds of the West, 9th Ed*. Western Society of Weed Science. 2001.
- Wingate J. *Rocky Mountain Flower Finder*. 1990. Nature Study Guild Publishers.
- Wingate and Yeatts. *Alpine Flower Flinder*. 2003. Johnson Books.

Gardening with native plant books

- Busco, J. and N. Morin. *Native Plants for High-Elevation Western Gardens*. Fulcrum Publishing, 2003.
- Phillips, Judith. *Natural by Design*. Museum of New Mexico Press 1995.
- Phillips, Judith. *Plants for Natural Gardens*. Museum of New Mexico Press 1995

Web-based

- Colorado Plant Database at www.coloradoplants.jeffco.us
- Colorado Native Plant Society: www.CONPS.org

Author: Irene Shonle, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Gilpin County Office

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CMG GardenNotes #583

Sources of Colorado Native Plants

This list was compiled by the **Colorado Native Plant Society** of nurseries that are known to sell Colorado native plants. It is not inclusive, and does not imply any endorsement of vendors.

Chelsea Nursery
3347 G Road
Clifton, CO 81520
970-434-8434
Stock: container

The Flower Bin
1850 Nelson Rd.
Longmont, CO 80501
303-772-3454
www.theflowerbin.net
Stock: container and seed

Fort Collins Nursery
2121 East Mulberry
Fort Collins, CO 80524
970-482-1984
www.fortcollinsnursery.com
Stock: container

Harlequin's Garden
4795 N 25th St
Boulder, CO 80301
303-939-9403
www.harlequinsgardens.com
Stock: container

Pawnee Buttes Seed Co.
PO Box 100
Greeley, CO 80632
800-782-5947
Fax: 970-356-7623
www.pawneebutteseed.com
Stock: seed

Pleasant Avenue Nursery
506 S Pleasant Ave
Buena Vista, CO 81211
719-395-6955
pan@amigo.net
Stock: container and seed

Ramshorn Native Plants
PO Box 881810
Steamboat Springs, CO 80488
970-276-4448
Ramshorn.np@att.net
Stock: container

Rocky Mountain Rare Plants
1706 Deerpath Rd
Franktown, CO 80116
303-688-6645
www.rmrp.com
Stock: seed

Sharp Brothers Seed Co.
104 East 4th Street Rd
Greeley, CO 80631
970-356-4170
www.sharpseed.com
Stock: Seed

Southwest Seed
13260 County Road 29
Dolores, CO 81323
970-565-8722
www.southwestseed.com
Stock: seed

Western Native Seed
PO Box 188
Coaldale, CO 81222
719-942-3935
www.westernnativeseed.com
Stock: seed

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