Little Bluestem in the Landscape

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Graham Hunter

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Little Bluestem in the Landscape

Heidi Kratsch, Extension Ornamental Horticulture Specialist
Graham Hunter, Research Associate, Center for Water Efficient Landscaping

**Schizachyrium scoparium**
Little Bluestem

**Description:** Perennial, warm season bunchgrass; blue-green foliage turning bronze in the fall. Flowers in mid to late summer; heads are tufted racemes. Plants can reach heights of up to 4 feet. This plant can be found naturally in desert surroundings, along waterways, and in rock crevices. This is a long-living plant that can be used ornamentally as a specimen, in a rock garden, or anywhere soil stabilization is desired. In winter, the seeds are favored by small birds.

**Cultural Requirements:**
- Native habitat: native all over the U.S. to prairies, dry hills, woodlands
- Soil: well drained, low fertility, pH 5.0-8.4
- Cold Tolerance: hardy to -38°F
- Drought Tolerance: high
- Salt Tolerance: not tolerant
- Sun/Shade Preference: full sun
- Transplanting: easy
- Propagation: seed or division
- Maintenance: crop to no less than 8 inches in early fall or late spring
- Pest Problems: no serious pest problems
Landscape Value:

- Use in the Landscape: specimen, soil stabilization, wildlife protection and food source
- Foliage: showy, attractive fall color
- Inflorescence: fine-textured

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit (seedheads)</td>
<td>feathery appearance when mature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>upright, tight, vertical lines</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>fine to medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ultimate Size</td>
<td>3 to 4 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate of Growth</td>
<td>Moderate; full height in 2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plant Community</td>
<td>parkland, pinyon-juniper, cool-desert shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>“Utah’s Choice” selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultivars</td>
<td>‘Blaze’: compact; intense pink-orange fall color; ‘The Blues’: intense blue leaf color</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

More Photos

Photo credits: Graham Hunter

References


USDA Plants Database. 2007. URL: http://plants.usda.gov.

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