Little Bluestem in the Landscape

Heidi Kratsch
Utah State University

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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<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><strong>Color</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fruit (seedheads)</strong></td>
<td>feathery appearance when mature</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Texture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ultimate Size</strong></td>
<td>3 to 4 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rate of Growth</strong></td>
<td>Moderate; full height in 2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plant Community</strong></td>
<td>parkland, pinyon-juniper, cool-desert shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Availability</strong></td>
<td>“Utah’s Choice” selection</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivars</strong></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](http://plants.usda.gov).

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This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.