

Andropogon gerardii

Turkeyfoot Grass, Lord Snowden, Big Bluestem

Poaceae Family (Grass Family)

Blooming season: Summer

Plant: perennial, warm season grass. It is tufted, forms sod, and has short, scaly rhizomes. Big bluestem is tall, reaching a height of 6 to 8 feet on most sites where it is protected from grazing. It is very leafy at the base, with some leaves carried up on the stem.



Leaves: None too few.

Flower: Yellow flower in summer. Not conspicuous.

Fruit: The seed heads normally have 3 spikelets that appear like a ‘turkey foot.’ Summer to Fall.

Geographic range: From the short grass prairie region to the Atlantic Ocean.

Habitat: Grows well in Coarse, fine and medium soils. Big bluestem is climatically adapted throughout the Midwest and Northeast on moderately well drained through excessively well drained soils. It is adapted to a range of other soil limitations such as shallow depth, low pH, and low fertility.

Common local companions: Other warm season grasses such as Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, and Switchgrass. (Sargent, 2000)

Usages:

Human: it is popularly used as erosion control alongside other warm season grasses, as well as to feed livestock, which prefer it to switchgrass.

Medicinal Uses: A decoction of the root can be taken for stomach pain, and it also acts as a diuretic. The blades of the grass can be used as a wash for fevers, or a decoction can be made from them to be used a stimulant for “general debility and languor”. (Moerman, 2009)

Animal: Birds and mammals use big bluestem for nesting and escape cover in summer and winter. It is also good for use as a spring nesting habitat for birds.

Why is it called *that*?

The seed heads normally have 3 spikelets that appear like a ‘turkey foot’, relating to its common name.

Outdoor Learning Center Reference Sheet



Works Cited

Moerman, D. E. (2009). *Native American Medicinal Plants* (pp. 63-756). Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Sargent, M. S., & Carter, K. S. (2000, May 22). *Warm Season Grasses*. Retrieved October 14, 2010, from http://www.dnr.state.mi.us/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/landowners_Guide/Resource_Dir/ Acrobat/WarmGrass.PDF

**United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service*. (2010, September 20). Retrieved September 22, 2010, from <http://plants.usda.gov/index.html>

* Used as a main source of information.