

Plant Name: Switchgrass

Scientific name: *Panicum virgatum L.*

Short Description:

Switchgrass is a native, perennial, tall-grass that is well adapted to the majority of the United States.

Description:

Switchgrass is a native, warm-season, perennial, tall grass that reproduces from seed and rhizomes. Switchgrass is categorized as either upland or lowland. Upland types are typically shorter and generally found on upland sites with lower fertility and drier conditions. Lowland types can reach 8 to 10 feet tall, very robust, and found in moister low areas with highfertility. Mature lowland types will tolerate long periods of flooding.

Switchgrass is a very persistent species with excellent drought hardiness and cold tolerance. Switchgrass is widely adapted and found throughout the United States with the exception of the West Coast. Switchgrass produces large seeds on a spangled-type seed head. The stem is round, hollow, and usually has a reddish tint. Switchgrass is easily identified by a small nest of hair where the blades attach to the sheath. Switchgrass is used for pasture and makes a good quality hay when mowed prior to seedhead formation. It should not be grazed closer than 5 to 7 inches during the growing season. In recent years interest in biofuel research has generated substantial interest in developing new varieties of Switchgrass as well as new management strategies. Cimarron Switchgrass is a new release that is produced and marketed exclusively by Johnston Seed. Check out Cimarron on our website. For conservation and range use, Switchgrass is usually seeded in mixtures with Bluestem, Indiangrass, and Sideoats Grama



Taxonomic Classification:

Switchgrass

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|---------------|---------------------------|
| Kingdom | Plantae |
| Subkingdom | Tracheobionta |
| Superdivision | Spermatophyta |
| Division | Magnoliophyta |
| Class | Lillosidea |
| Subclass | Commelinidae |
| Order | Cyperales |
| Family | Poaceae |
| Genus | <i>Panicum</i> |
| Species | <i>Panicum viratum L.</i> |

Plant Characteristics:

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| Height: | 36 to 120 inches |
| Growth habit: | bunchgrass |
| Bloom period: | mid- late summer |
| Sun requirement: | full sun |
| Leaf foliage color: | green |
| Seeds per pound: | 400,000 |
| Minimum soil temperature for germination: | 55 to 60 F° |
| Soil pH range: | 4.5 to 8.0 |
| Planting rate: | 4 to 6 pls lb acre |
| Planting depth: | ¼ inch |
| Panting season: | March to May |

Use:

Erosion control: Switchgrass has been long used for many conservation applications including but not limited to buffer strips, Conservation Reserve Program, and stream bank erosion.

Livestock: Switchgrass provides a suitable forage for hay and grazing if harvested prior to seedhead formation. Forage quality diminishes rapidly when the reproductive stage is initiated in mid to late summer.

Wildlife: Switchgrass is extensively used in as cover for deer, turkey, and upland game birds. Switchgrass the best choice for establishing new habitat cover for pheasant.

Landscape: Switchgrass is also used in landscape plantings. It is typically used as perimeter screens and accent plants. Switchgrass can be moderately invasive in some applications.

Commercially Available Cultivars:

Lowland Types:

'Kanlow' (released by the Plant Materials Center, Manhattan, Kansas)

'Alamo' (released by the USDA Conservation Service in Texas in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station)

'Cimarron' (was released by Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station in 2008, patented, and exclusively licensed to Johnston Seed Company for production and marketing. Cimarron was specifically developed for improved biomass production for the biofuel industry)

Upland Types:

'Blackwell' (developed by the Plant Materials Center, Manhattan, Kansas and released in 1944 by the Kansas Experiment Station and the USDA Soil Conservation Service)

'Cave-in-Rock' (released by the Elsberry Plant Material Center, Elsberry, Missouri in 1973)