Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks

Andropogon gerardii 'Blackhawks'

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 2a

Other Names: Big Bluestem, Turkey Foot

Description:

This selection of native prairie grass has an impressive stature and beautiful seasonal foliage that develops dark purple highlights by mid summer, then turns near black in fall; plant in full sun for best color; an excellent screen or border plant

Ornamental Features

Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The plum purple seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to early fall. It attractive grassy leaves are green in color with showy purple variegation. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of burgundy, deep purple and black in the fall. The red stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks is an herbaceous perennial grass with an upright spreading habit of growth. It brings an extremely fine and delicate texture to the garden composition and should be used to full effect.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cut back to the ground in late winter before active growth resumes. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Vertical Accent
- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use



Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

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Planting & Growing

Bluestem Grass, Blackhawks will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. To help this plant achive its best flowering performance, periodically apply a flower-boosting fertilizer from early spring through into the active growing season. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.