



ARIZONA SONORA
DESERT
MUSEUM

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Native Grasses

Many species of native Arizona perennial grasses need little or no irrigation once established in Tucson. All are warm-season growers; the tops are often dead and brown from late fall until the summer rains. Most will green up as early as April if watered. Those found in wetter areas need more water, but may stay greener longer.

- Aristida purpurea*, Purple Three-awn**, is a fine-textured bunch grass to about 1½' tall with feathery purplish spikes. Grow in full sun. Readily spreads by seed.
- Bothriochloa barbinodis*, Cane Beardgrass**, is a large, coarse-textured bunchgrass that can be established easily and taken off irrigation. Readily spreads by seed. Grow in full sun.
- Bouteloua chondrosioides*, Sprucetop Grama**, is a small bunchgrass about 1' tall with delicate fuzzy spikes from which hang showy bright orange anthers. Grow in full sun to light shade.
- Bouteloua curtipendula*, Side-oats Grama**, is a bunch grass about 2' tall with tall, narrow inflorescences with the spikelets arranged on one side of the stem. Grow in full sun to light shade.
- Bouteloua eriopoda*, Black Grama**, is a low bunchgrass that spreads by aerial stolons. Numerous fine leaves and multiple stems give a mounding look to it. Grow in full sun.
- Bouteloua hirsuta*, Hairy Grama**, is a medium-sized bunchgrass forming robust clumps. May spread by seed. Grow in full sun to light shade.
- Bouteloua gracilis*, Blue Grama**, is a medium-sized delicate appearing bunchgrass. It readily reproduces by seed. Grow in full sun to light shade. ‘Hachita’ is a dwarf form
- Bouteloua repens*, Slender Grama**, is a smaller bunchgrass well adapted to desert conditions. Can be removed from irrigation once established. Grow in full sun. Will spread by seed.
- Bouteloua rothrockii*, Rothrock Grama**, is an attractive medium-sized bunchgrass. It stays narrow and has tall, slender flower spikes, giving it a delicate appearance. Grow in full sun.
- Cathhestecum brevifolium* (*Bouteloua diversispicula*), False Grama**, is a fine-textured perennial, growing only inches high. 4" delicate spikes of flowers have a reddish tint. Spreads by aerial stolons. Grow in full sun.

CULTURE: Most of our grasses need full sun to do well and will perform best in heavy, clay-rich soil. They will need more water in well-drained soils. Plant container-grown grasses at the same depth as they were in the pot. Water both seedlings and transplants generously and deeply through the first summer to establish a deep root system which may go down three feet or more. Also protect from rabbits and other wildlife until growing vigorously.

Once established many can survive on rainfall plus occasional summer irrigation except as noted. More water results in larger plants. The dead stems from previous years are persistent and tend to shade out new growth. Cut them to the ground at least every two years to rejuvenate them.

“Dew” on leaves in the morning is actually natural leakage from within the leaf. Butterflies find this an irresistible source of moisture and minerals.