

Prairie Dropseed: *Sporobolus heterolepsis*



Cultivation: The preference is full sun, mesic to dry conditions, and soil that is loamy, rocky, or gravelly. Because the seeds are difficult to germinate, it is easier to propagate this grass by dividing the dense tufts of leaves. Once it becomes established at a suitable site, Prairie Dropseed is long-lived. Shade and acidic soils. Habitats consist primarily of hill prairies, gravel prairies, dolomite prairies, black soil prairies, cemetery prairies, prairie remnants along railroads, and limestone glades. Less often, Prairie Dropseed has been found in savannas, thinly wooded rocky bluffs, and grassy fens. This grass is found primarily in high quality natural areas. It is also cultivated as an ornamental plant. The seeds are eaten by sparrows and other granivorous songbirds from late summer into winter; these species include the Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, and Slate-Colored Junco. The foliage is readily eaten by bison, cattle, and horses. Sometimes voles and other small rodents dig burrows within the dense tufts of leaves and root mass of this prairie grass.



Plant Structure: This native perennial grass forms dense tufts of sprawling leaves about 1-2' tall and 2-3' across. In each tuft, the infertile (flowerless) shoots are more abundant than the fertile (flowering) shoots. One or more flowering culms develop from the center of each leafy clump. The narrow leaf blades are up to 20" long and 2 mm. across; they are medium green, hairless, and either flat or somewhat rolled lengthwise. The leaf sheaths are usually hairless, although a few hairs may be present at their summits. The root system is fibrous and short-rhizomatous. This grass spreads primarily by reseeding itself.