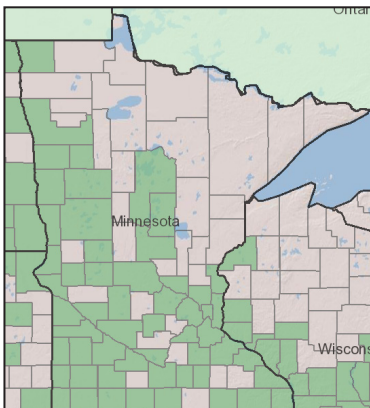


Side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Family: Grass
(Poaceae)

DESCRIPTION: A deep-rooted, perennial prairie grass, side-oats grama grows in clumps up to 2.5 feet tall, with rows of seed spikes that appear to grow on one side of the arching stems. Summer flowers produce vibrant yellow, orange, or purple stamens. The grass prefers dry sites such as bluff prairies, rock outcroppings, roadsides and prairies dominated by sand or gravel.

USES: With roots up to 4 feet deep, it's useful for slope stabilization and erosion control. Its fibrous roots also add organic material to nutrient-poor soils. Used in iron ore, coal, sand and gravel mine reclamation, the species is also common in roadside plantings, urban boulevards and dry prairie restorations. A food source for grazers, birds, and skipper moths, it also provides nesting material for native bees.



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: None

ID: Oat-like seeds grow in short spikes, arranged alternately along arching stems. The spikes align on one side of the stem, contributing to the plant's common name. A clump-forming grass, its leaf blades are concentrated near the base of the plant, growing about a quarter-inch wide and up to 2 feet long.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Another grass in the *Bouteloua* genus, blue grama (*B. gracilis*), may appear with side-oats grama in dry prairie restorations, urban sites and roadsides with dry soils. Blue grama is shorter, growing up to 1 foot tall. Its clusters of seed spikes resemble long eyelashes.

Planting Recommendations

The grass can be started from seed, available from native seed companies and nurseries, or from containers. Once soil temperatures reach about 50 degrees, seeds are usually planted a quarter-inch to half-inch deep using a native seed drill. Broadcast seeding is more successful if the ground is raked afterward to increase seed-to-soil

contact. The species thrives in dry, sunny conditions. It can grow in any soil, including well-drained clay. Clipping surrounding weeds cuts competition while the grasses establish. Good companion plants include the dry prairie species prairie smoke, showy goldenrod, black-eyed Susan and rough blazing star.

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REFERENCES:
[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)
[Fire Effects Information System \(USDA, USFS\)](#)