

# North Dakota Grassland Plant Identification

NARRATED VERSION

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# Smooth bromegrass

*Bromus inermis*

Cool-season grass  
Non-native



Inflorescence  
(flowering head)  
easily recognizable

2-4 feet tall

"W" crease in leaves



# Kentucky bluegrass

*Poa pratensis*

Cool-season grass

Non-native



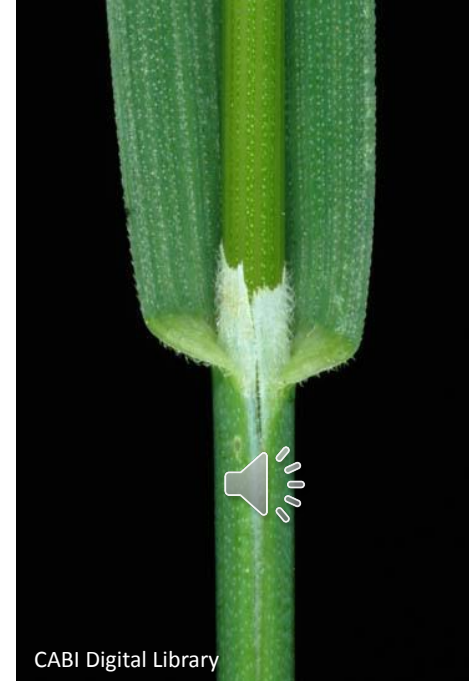
1-2 feet tall



Thin  
leaves

Inflorescence smaller  
than smooth  
bromegrass

“Canoe”  
leaf tips





# Western wheatgrass

*Pascopyrum smithii*

Cool-season grass

Native – ND STATE GRASS



2-4 feet tall



Leaves with bluish waxy coating



Leaves rough to touch

Obvious reddish auricles and collar



Inflorescence a single spike



# Quackgrass

*Elymus repens*

Cool-season grass

Non-native

Leaves lack bluish color of western wheatgrass



2-4 feet tall



Green auricles clasp stem



Inflorescence a single spike



# Big bluestem

*Andropogon gerardii*

Warm-season grass

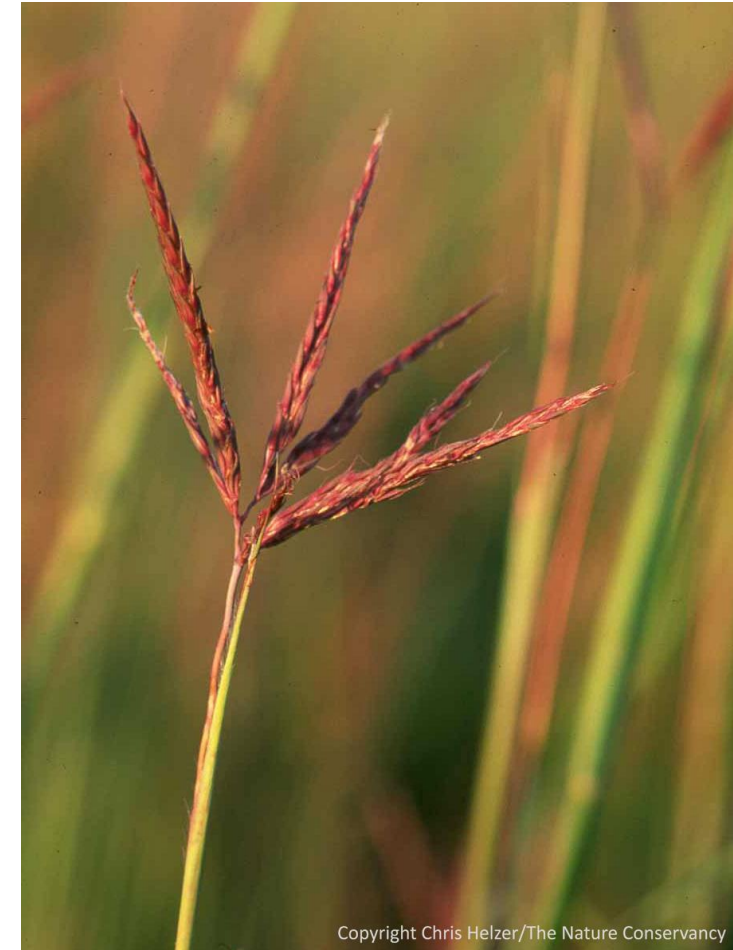
Native



4-7 feet tall



Leaf bases and sheaths fringed with white hairs



Inflorescence like a turkey foot 



# Little bluestem

*Schizachyrium scoparium*

Warm-season grass  
Native



Native American Seed

Grows in bunches



North Carolina Extension



© 2014 Katy Chayka

Stems flat near base



2003 © Peter M. Dziuk

2-3 feet tall



UA Division of Agriculture Extension



# Indian grass

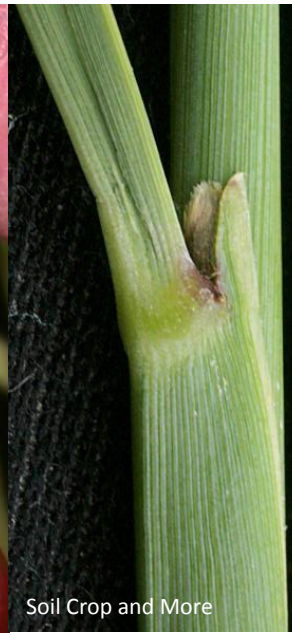
*Sorghastrum nutans*

Warm-season grass

Native



Missouri Department of Conservation



Soil Crop and More

Sharply pointed  
auricles



UA Division of Agriculture Extension

Sheath can be  
variously hairy



2005 © Peter M. Dziuk

Inflorescence more  
closed than open



Soil Crop and More

4-7 feet tall



# Switchgrass

*Panicum virgatum*

Warm-season grass

Native



3-6 feet tall



Ligule densely fringed with hairs



Inflorescence large and open



# Sideoats grama

*Bouteloua curtipendula*

Warm-season grass

Native



2-3 feet tall



Leaf edges and sheaths scattered with hairs



Inflorescence a single spike with spikelets on either side





# Blue grama

*Bouteloua gracilis*

Warm-season grass  
Native

Leaves thinner than  
sideoats grama



High Plains Environmental Center



2015 © Peter M. Dziuk



Stock Seed Farms

Inflorescence  
like eyelashes



Illinois Wildflowers

½-2 feet tall

Collars variously hairy



# Black-eyed Susan

*Rudbeckia hirta*

Forb

Native

© 2009 Katy Chayka



1-3 feet tall



Go Botany

Leaves alternate

Yellow petals  
and dark  
center

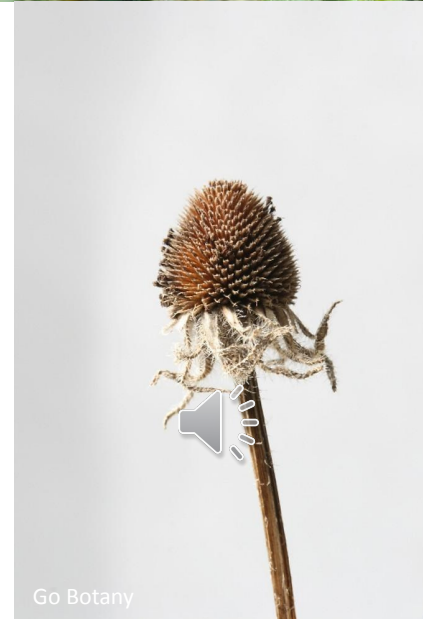
Leaves and  
stems rough  
with stiff hairs



Illinois Wildflowers



Ornitho Edge Wildflowers  
http://www.ornithoedge.com



Go Botany



# Maximilian sunflower

*Helianthus maximiliani*

Forb

Native



Missouri Plants

Leaves alternate  
or opposite

Leaves arch  
downwards



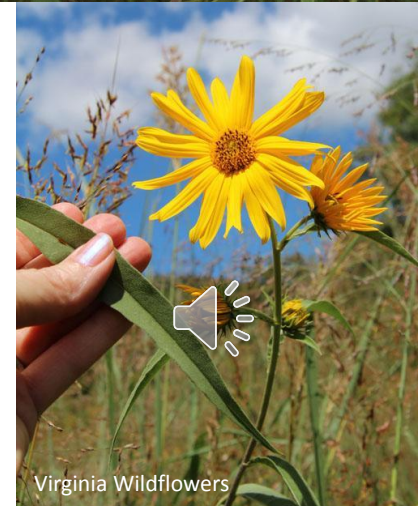
© Texas Tech University

Leaves and  
stems rough



The Echinacea Project

Yellow petals  
and  
brown/yellow  
center



Virginia Wildflowers



Beaux Arbres Native Plants

2-6 feet tall



# Upright prairie coneflower

*Ratibida columnifera*

Forb  
Native



1-3 feet tall



Leaves alternate  
and deeply divided



Droopy yellow petals  
and long head

Stems slightly  
rough and may  
feel angled





# Common yarrow

*Achillea millefolium*

Forb  
Native

Leaves alternate



Leaves  
finely  
divided



Little white  
flowers

Leaves and  
stems finely  
textured  
and soft



1-2 feet tall





# Canada thistle

*Cirsium arvense*

Forb

Non-native NOXIOUS WEED



Leaves alternate



Purple flowers turn to fluff

Leaves wavy and spiny



Stems smooth



2-4 feet tall



# Leafy spurge

*Euphorbia virgata*

Forb

Non-native NOXIOUS WEED



Leaves alternate although appear whorled



Green flowers

Plant secretes white sap when broken

Western New York Prism

5543195



North Dakota State University

1-2 feet tall



Jefferson County, Colorado



Jefferson County, Colorado





# Absinth wormwood

*Artemisia absinthium*

Forb

Non-native NOXIOUS WEED

Leaves deeply  
divided



Tiny golden  
flowers, many  
per plant



Sage color  
and smell



2-4 feet tall





# Western snowberry

*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*

Shrub  
Native



Often grows  
in thick  
patches



Pink and  
white flowers

The Prairie Ecologist

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© Keir Morse

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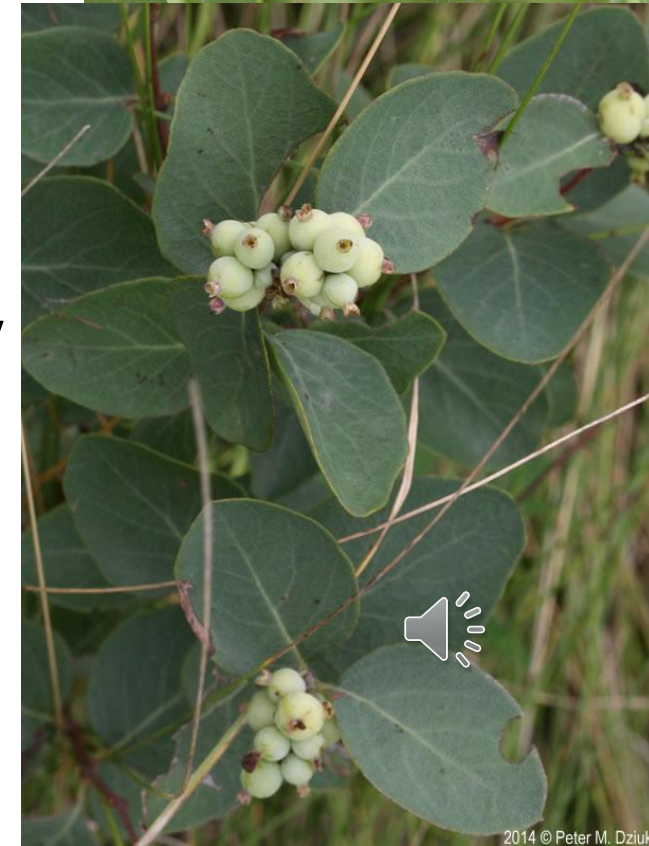


Missouri Plants

© 2007 Katy Chayka

Leaves opposite  
and somewhat  
leathery

Berries gooeey  
when  
squished



2014 © Peter M. Dziuk

1-3 feet tall



# Prairie rose

*Rosa arkansana*

Shrub

Native – ND STATE FLOWER



Illinois Wildflowers

5 Pinkish-white petals with yellow centers

Sharp prickles on stem



Prairie Moon Nursery



Morning Sky Greenery



Red rose hips



1-2 feet tall



© 2007 k. chayka

Leaves compound with toothed leaflets



# Purple prairie clover

*Dalea purpurea*

Legume  
Native



Leaves alternate  
and compound

Leaves smell  
sweet when  
crushed



Tubular  
purple  
flowers



1-3 feet tall





# Alfalfa

*Medicago sativa*

Legume  
Non-native

Purple  
flowers

Leaves alternate  
and compound  
in 3s



1-3 feet tall





# Sweetclover

*Melilotus spp.*

Legume  
Non-native



Betterbee

2-5 feet tall



Go Botany

Leaves alternate  
and compound  
in 3s

Leaflet edges  
usually  
toothed

Yellow SC flowers



Southwest Desert Flora



© 2009 k. chayka

White SC flowers



# Identification steps

1. What's the overall appearance like?
  - *Is it tall or short? Is it growing thick or thin? Is it a grass or broad-leaved plant?*
2. Looking closer, what's the first thing you notice?
  - *Color? Prickles? Flowers? etc.*
3. Leaf and stem characteristics?
  - Grass  *Ligule? Auricles? Color? Texture?*
  - Broad-leaved plant  *Simple or compound? Alternate/opposite/whorled? Shape? Edges? Texture?*
4. If an inflorescence or flowers are present, what do they look like?
  - Grass  *Inflorescence type? Size and shape?*
  - Broad-leaved plant  *Size and shape? Color? Number of petals?*





# Additional resources

- Minnesota Wildflowers is great for identification of most plants, you can use “advanced search” to narrow your search down
  - <https://minnesotawildflowers.info/>
- Seek by iNaturalist (app) identifies plants using your phone’s camera, but it only works for plants with showy flowers present
- Use quiz version to test your identification knowledge
- Lastly, have fun!

