NEBRASKA
STATEWIDE
Arboretum
Why use ornamental grasses?

- Ability to thrive despite Great Plains weather extremes and soil types
- Ornamental grasses requires little if any supplemental irrigation once established
- Ornamental grasses resist insect pests and disease.
- Provide critical habitat for local wildlife
- Deer, bunnies and grasshoppers don’t eat them
Why use ornamental grasses?

- Sound & Movement
- Light & Translucency
- The Quality of Line
- Form, Texture & Scale
- Foliage & Flower Color
• Form, Texture & Scale
• Sound & Movement
Light & Translucency
Woody florals & ornamental grasses—together at last
Adding Ornamental Grasses

DON’T

• Design your grass garden with an automatic irrigation system. Avoid top watering.
• Mulch too deep. Provide a light 1-2” layer
• Space plants too far apart
• Mix grasses that aren’t adapted to your site
What are Sedges?

• Sedges are grass-like plants from the Genus Carex. There are over 60 Carex species native to Nebraska!
• Of all the species, there is even one called Nebraska sedge.
• Many are strictly clump forming plants and others spread slowly by rhizomes.
Native sedges are not yellow nutsedge!

Yellow nutsedge is native to Europe and is from the genus Cyperus.
SEDGES HAVE THE EDGES

Grass-like plants for Part-shade to Shade
Beauty in Utility

• Native sedges add form, texture, and color to dappled shade created by overstory trees.

• Woodland sedges are easy to grow, adaptable to soil types, drought tolerant.

• Sedges are not only functional, but ornamentally appropriate as well.
Dappled Shade

• Many woodland wildflowers are ephemeral
• Combine with shade tolerant grasses and sedges.
Oak Sedge, Carex albicans
‘Appalachian Sedge, Carex ‘Appalachica’
Bristleleaf Sedge, Carex eburnea
Pennsylvania Sedge, *Carex pennsylvanica*
Seersucker Sedge, *Carex plantaginea*
Curlystyled Wood Sedge, Carex rosea
Longbeak Sedge, Carex sprengelii
Sedge Lawn Alternatives
• Native sedges provide year-round vegetative cover without need for supplemental irrigation.
• Sedges can greatly reduce or eliminate the need for mowing. Reducing soil compaction and increasing water infiltration.
• Sedge meadows eliminate or greatly reduce the need for raking leaves. They fall and settle between the plants, providing nature’s mulch.
Grasses for Part-shade

Korean Feather Reed Grass, Calamagrostis brachytricha
Silky Wildrye, *Elymus villosus*
Bottlebrush Grass, *Hystrix patula*
Why use prairie grasses?

• Lowland prairie plants will help clean our water supply. Deep rooted prairie plants also have extensive surface roots that act as a filter.

• If big prairie forbs are allowed to grow on their own, without competition from grasses, they soon take advantage by growing too big or spread too much.
1/3 of roots die at the end of growing season, adding organic matter to the soil.

Roots add nutrients while opening up spaces for water and air to penetrate.
There are many types of native sedge plants to choose from, but they offer the opportunity to renew natural landscapes while giving the gardener a hardy plant made for the region.
Why Native Sedges?

Carex have the ability to take up contaminants in the water. They not only take up significant amounts of N and P, but remove toxic heavy metals, so that the water that infiltrates or flows through is cleaner.

Sedges’ grass-like leaf blades slow water movement, allowing time to clean the water, and their deep fibrous roots improve infiltration of water into the soil.

Sedges emerge in early spring, growing quickly into dense green tufts that work to out-compete winter annual weeds. The bright green mounds of foliage are a welcome site to a mostly dormant early spring landscape.
Native Sedges Can Reduce Maintenance

Native sedges and rushes establish quickly, often reaching maturity by the end of the first growing season.

They are ideal for the lowest zone of the swale, plants that can thrive in standing water, while surviving periods of drought. Native sedges also meet the design criterion that requires low height vegetation for visibility.

They function as stabilizers, biological filters and provide food and shelter for wildlife. Carex species are not only functional, but is ornamental appropriate as well. Finally, sedges are not bothered by deer, rabbits or grasshoppers—they don’t like to eat them!
Carex comosa, Longhair Sedge
Fringed Sedge, Carex crinata
Gray’s Sedge, Carex grayi
Porcupine Sedge, Carex hystericina
Carex muskingumensis, palm sedge
‘Little Midge’ palm sedge
Broom Sedge, *Carex scoparia*
Tussock Sedge, Carex stricta
FOX SEDGE, Carex vulpinioidea
Yellowfruited Sedge, Carex annectens
Cattail Sedge, Carex squarrosa
Short Prairie Grasses
for sunny, dry sites

1-3’ in height
Prairie Sedge, Carex bicknellii
Texas Sedge, *Carex texensis*
Blue Grama Grass, 
*Bouteloua gracilis,*
'Blonde Ambition' Blue Grama Grass
Sideoats Grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula*
Prairie Junegrass, Koeleria macrantha
Little Bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
‘Blaze’ Little Bluestem
‘Twilight Zone’ Little Bluestem

‘Carousel’ Little Bluestem
‘The Blues’ Little Bluestem
Plains Muhly, Muhlenbergia cuspidata
Prairie Dropseed, Sporobolus heterolepis
Taller Grasses
Sand Bluestem, *Andropogon hallii*
Big Bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*
‘Pawnee’ Big Bluestem
It provides good cover for nesting and is a larval host for the Dotted Skipper (*Hesperia attalus*), and other skippers.
‘Windwalker’ Big Bluestem
‘Lord Snowdon’ Big Bluestem
‘Red October ’ Big Bluestem
‘Blackhawks’ Big Bluestem
‘Indian Warrior’ Big Bluestem
‘Dancing Wind’ Big Bluestem
Canada Wildrye, *Elymus canadensis*
Sand Lovegrass, *Eragrostis trichoides*
Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*
‘Dallas Blues’ Switchgrass, Panicum virgatum
‘Heavy Metal’ Switchgrass
‘Northwind’ Switchgrass
Non-Native Ornamental Grasses

Calamagrostis x acutiflora ‘Karl Foerster, Feather Reed Grass
‘Overdam’ Feather Reed Grass
'Evergold' Sedge, Carex oshimensis
Ice Dance sedge, Carex morrowii ‘Ice Dance’
Ribbon Grass, Phalaris arundinacea ‘Picta’
Blue Fesque, Festuca glauca ‘Elijah Blue’
‘Sapphire’ Blue Oat Grass, *Helictotrichon sempervirens*

- Height: 2-3’
  Width: 2’
- Better blue color, disease resistance (especially to rust) and better tolerance for heat and humidity.
- Easy to grow, clump-forming, cool season.
Miscanthus or Maiden Grass
‘Autumn Red’ Miscanthus
‘Morning Light’ Miscanthus
‘Variegated’ Miscanthus
‘Zebrinus’ Miscanthus
Miscanthus giganteus
Ravenna Grass, *Saccharum ravennae*
Giant Reed Grass, *Arundo donax*
• ‘SKYRACER’
• PURPLE MOOR GRASS
• Molina caerulea
GIANT SAKATON, Sporobolus wrightii
AUTUMN MOOR GRASS, *Sesleria autumnalis*
Chinese Pennisetum, *Pennisetum alopecuroides*
‘Hameln’ Chinese Pennisetum
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