



Lake County, Illinois, USA

Lake County Seed Collection Guide

Summer Wetland Forbs

Kelly Schultz¹, Dale Shields²

¹Lake County Forest Preserve District, ²Volunteer Stewardship Network

Photos ©2021 DJShields. Produced by: Dale Shields & Kelly Schultz ©Lake County Forest Preserve District [kschultz@lcfpd.org]



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[fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org] [1276]

version 2 3/2021

The pictures in this guide were assembled to help restoration volunteers identify ripe seeds of native species. The squares are 1” on a side in the indoor shots with white squares on the gray background. The seed shots are on a metric scale (mm divisions). Names used are those of Flora of the Chicago Region by Gerould Wilhelm and Laura Rericha. Our heartfelt thanks go to Laurie Ryan of the McHenry County Conservation District for her review.

Harvest notes

Successful collection of viable seed requires an understanding of when to collect, how to collect, how to store, how to process, and when to sow. Determine these criteria and have a plan before harvesting seeds, especially of uncommon species. The species are listed in order of the photo dates, so will give an approximate time for collection, but collection dates vary according to local weather effects on blooming and pollinators; proximity to Lake Michigan; slopes; sun vs shade, etc. Many seed harvest charts are available with collection dates, but it is best to scout each site rather than relying on historic dates.

Seeds collected before mid-June should be sown right away. They are intolerant of dry storage and most of them require both warm & cold treatments to stimulate germination. Late June seeds are more tolerant of dry storage; sow these seeds soon, but you can let them dry for a few weeks. Seeds ripening July and later can be held for fall/winter sowing, sow by Jan 1st for best results.

Collect ethically & sustainably. Everything is protected in forest preserves, including seeds. Collection is only allowed by staff and volunteers in our restoration programs. If you are collecting within those programs, it is important to avoid overharvesting wild populations. For perennials: **leave 50% behind.** For annuals, biennials, rare, threatened, or endangered species: **collect only 10% of the seed.**

Shattering seeds can be tough to visually judge for ripeness. Use a *gentle* touch test to see if the seeds easily loosen. Spring seeds remain green (perhaps for camouflage) and swell slightly. Fall seeds typically turn brown or beige when ripe. Often found in colonies, these seeds do not travel far on their own. Some of these species drop quickly & are not Mama’s Boys.



Do Not Collect. This symbol is placed on images of non-native & invasive native seeds, which have been included as comparisons for similar native species. Do not collect these species, unless you are collecting for removal.



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Short-headed Bracted
Sedge

Carex cephalophora

CYPERACEAE

CAREX:
PHAESTOGLOCHIN

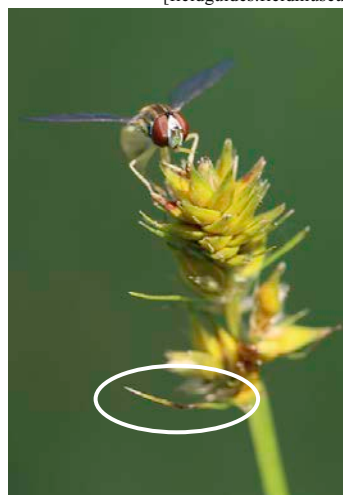


Photo: 7-5-19

Small clusters of terminal seeds, with little bracts sticking out under the spikelets, perpendicular to the stem. Collect when crumbles by hand. Grows in dry-mesic & mesic woodlands.

Straight-styled Wood
Sedge

Carex radiata

CYPERACEAE

CAREX:
PHAESTOGLOCHIN



Photo: 7-4-2018

One of the "star sedges." *C. radiata* & *C. rosea* look very similar! *Radiata* is more often in wetter shady spots; *rosea* is more likely in the upland. *Radiata* is generally in a looser, less dense/robust clump. Sow fresh for best results.

Curly-styled Wood
Sedge

Carex rosea

CYPERACEAE

CAREX:
PHAESTOGLOCHIN



Photo: 7-6-2018

Radiata has *mostly* straight styles, *rosea* is all curly (check Apr/May). Leaves of *radiata* are *mostly* less than 2mm wide, leaves of *rosea* are *mostly* 2-3mm wide. Both species are great to have, and their habitats overlap. Seeds strip off easily by hand when ripe.

Summer Grasses and Kin

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Pale Sedge

Carex granularis

CYPERACEAE

CAREX: GRANULARES



Photo: 7-10-19

Mama's Boy. One of several species with seeds like little granules, this one is common in moist meadows, fens, and ditches. Grows in clumps. Consult a *Carex* book, specifically the sections for Granulares, Griseae, and Laxiflorae. Collect when it easily crumbles by hand.

Fuzzy Wuzzy Sedge
aka
Hairy Green Sedge

Carex hirsutella

CYPERACEAE

CAREX: POROCYSTIS



Photo: 7-18-17

One of a few hairy woodland sedges, this one forms loose clumps with wiry fruiting stems. Perigynia are hairless and clustered like rounded pinecones. Collect when easy to strip by hand, typically green.

Loose-headed Bracted
Sedge

Carex sparganioides

CYPERACEAE

CAREX:
PHAESTOGLOCHIN



Photo: 8-5-17

Mama's Boy. Well-named for the loosely spaced spikelets of seeds. The seed stalks are taller than most woodland sedges, although they are often knocked flat to the ground by the time the seed is ripe.

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Spreading Oval Sedge

Carex normalis

CYERACEAE

CAREX: OVALES

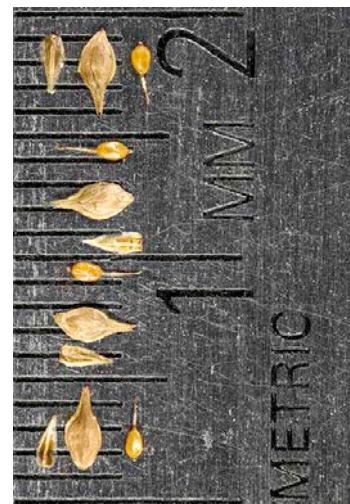


Photo: 8-8-2018

Mama's Boy. Another pesky oval sedge. This one typically has a kink in the stem above the lowest spikelet, pointing off towards the horizon. Shade preferred, but can grow in sun with wetter soils.

Common Woodrush

Luzula multiflora

JUNCACEAE

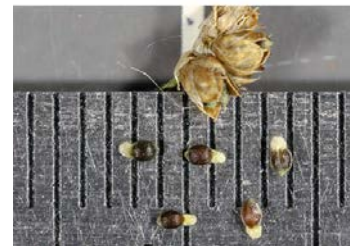
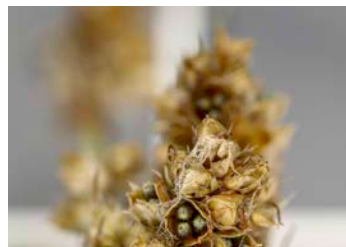


Photo: 6-14-18

Beaks. Common woodrush is not common at all. Brown capsules open up to reveal tiny Oreo-colored seeds inside. Collect when capsules are brown and open. Sow fresh. Grows in savannas, open woodlands, and prefers mesic to dry-mesic soils.

Path Rush

Juncus tenuis

JUNCACEAE

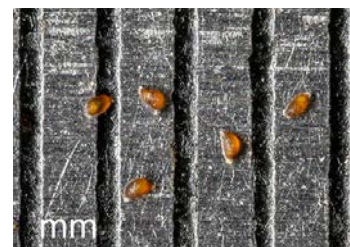


Photo: 8-3-18

An ultra-common rush, this wiry & resilient species often pops up in trampled paths (hence the name). Seed capsules turn beige & split open in 3 parts, shaking out teeny tiny seeds – note the seed photo shows them about as wide as the line on a millimeter ruler.

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Slender Wedge Grass

*Sphenopholis
intermedia*

POACEAE



Photo: 6-19-17

This native annual has feathery seed heads that turn creamy off-white when ripe. Seeds become very loose and can be stripped by hand or clipped. Does well in disturbance, fades away as more conservation natives take hold.

Porcupine Grass

Hesperostipa spartea

POACEAE

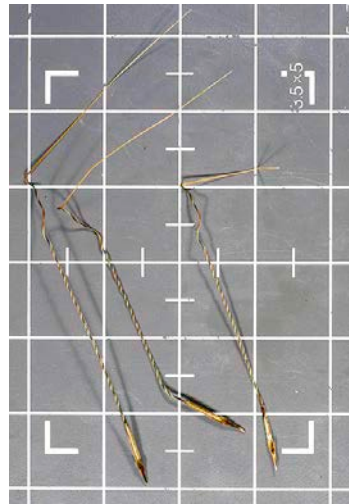


Photo: 6-24-18

Well-named with sharp pointy seeds, ouch! Seeds drill themselves into the soil, as the long awns (seed tails) twist with changing moisture. Look for dark awns contrasted against the pale glumes; seed will come off with a gentle tug. *Best stored with constant humidity, and for as short as possible. Forgotten bundles turn into a tangled nightmare.* If awns are removed, bury the seeds 3/4". Use a nail to make a hole.

Common Panic Grass

*Dichanthelium
implicatum*

POACEAE

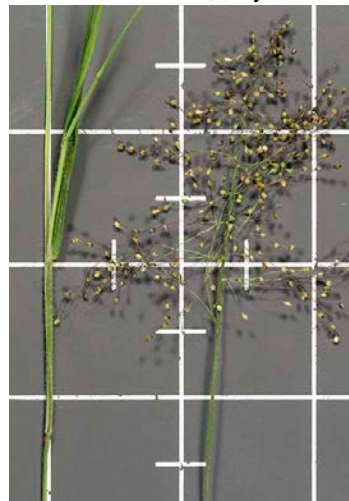


Photo: 7-10-19

This panic grass has much smaller seeds than Leiberg's & Scribner's. Common in disturbed & open places. Seeds are ripe when they are beige-ish and are best sown fresh. Panic grasses have seeds arranged in a panicle (xmas tree shape, and each branch has several branches)

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Broad-leaved Panic Grass

Dichanthelium latifolium

POACEAE

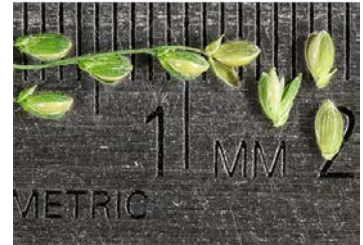


Photo: 6-23-18

*Dichanthelium*s, are tough to collect. The seeds will ripen sporadically on the same plant. Look for tiny purple florets at the apex of the seed; these are blooming and should not be collected. Seeds are hidden in glumes, like a hairy clamshell and are beige-ish when ripe. Note: all species that have been renamed *Dichanthelium* (literally “twice-flowering”) will form more seeds later (August).

Prairie Panic Grass aka Leiberg’s Panic Grass

Dichanthelium leibergii

POACEAE



Photo: 6-27-18

Dichanthelium species are tough to collect & ID. This species has hairy spikelets, with some hairs more than 0.5 mm long. Strip the seeds with feather-light pressure, only a few seeds will be ripe each day. It takes patience & persistence to collect a quantity.

Scribner’s Panic Grass

Dichanthelium scribnerianum

POACEAE

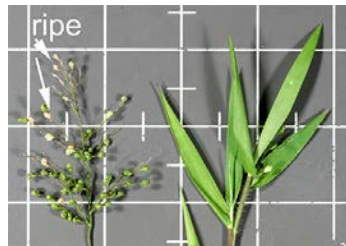


Photo: 7-3-19

Very similar to *D. leibergii*, but *D. scribnerianum* has smaller spikelets, 3.1 - 3.3 mm long (3.7 - 4 mm for *D. leibergii*), and spikelet has miniscule hairs, if at all (*D. leibergii* spikelet hairs can be 0.75 mm long). Ligule is a single row of hairs (no ligule on *D. leibergii*).

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Poverty Oat Grass

Danthonia spicata

POACEAE



Photo: 7-1-18

Mama's Boy. Collect when beige & crumbles easily by hand. Named for its preference for impoverished soils. Look for tufts of curled basal leaves.

Orchard Grass

Dactylis glomerata

POACEAE



Photo: 7-4-18

Introduced for grazing, this grass is most often in disturbed soils but can be found in better quality habitats. Looks similar to reed canary grass, but not as obnoxious. Spikelets are rounded and generally upright. Do not collect.

Nodding Fescue

Festuca subverticillata

POACEAE

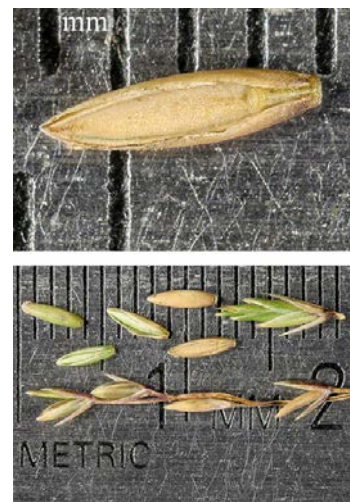


Photo: 7-10-19

This native fescue is found in mesic woodlands. Usually in low abundance, it may be a short-lived perennial. The lowest seed stalk tends to 'nod' toward the ground, and the entire panicle nods towards the ground when ripe. Collect when beige and strips easily by hand.

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Green Fowl Manna Grass

Glyceria striata

POACEAE



Photo: 7-16-2020

Mama's Boy. This common grass is found most often in wetlands, both in full sun and in shade, but can also be found in dry-mesic woodlands and muddy path edges. *Flora* moves this species from [FACW] to [FAC] for our region. Grass blades have a palm-look to them. Easy to collect: strip beige seeds when loose. Seeds feel granular. Var. *striata* has leaves 5mm wide or less, often folded; lemmas purplish.

Hungarian Brome

Bromus inermis

POACEAE

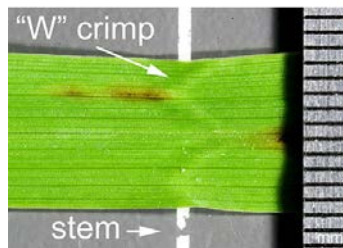


Photo: 7-24-18

A cool-season pasture grass that readily spreads by rhizomes to form a dense, clumping sod. Usually hairless (also called smooth brome) and has a W-shaped crimp about halfway up the blade. Crowds out natives & needs to be killed or reduced before native seeding can occur.

Timothy

Phleum pratense

POACEAE

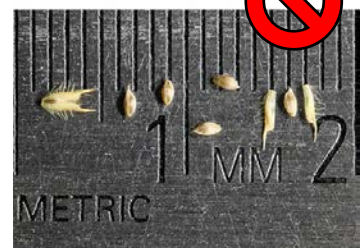


Photo: 8-4-18

Planted as a pasture grass, this species is found in disturbed soils and old Ag fields. The dense spike generally makes it easy to ID.

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Bearded Wheat Grass

Roegneria subsecunda

POACEAE



Photo: 7-24-19

Mama's Boy. Collect when seeds are light brown. Glumes (the bottom two scales of a spikelet) may still be green. Bearded wheat grass has longer awns at the peak of the seeds.

Slender Wheat Grass

Roegneria trachycaula

POACEAE



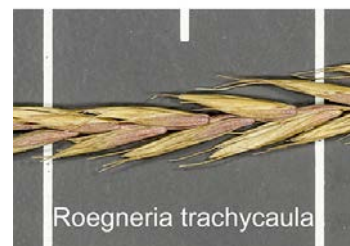
Photo: 7-24-17

Mama's Boy. Collect when seeds are light brown. Glumes (clamshell as the base of the spikelet) may still be green. Awns (points at the end of the seed) are short to absent.

Quack Grass
Elytrigia repens

vs.

Wheat Grass
Roegneria spp.



Don't confuse the invasive Quack Grass, *Elytrigia repens*, with Wheat Grass. Flora of the Chicago Region now separates these genera out from the *Agropyron* genus. *Elytrigia* stems grow from rhizomes so flowering stems are distributed in a patch. *Roegneria* stems are bunched (cespitose). *Elytrigia* spikelets are persistent and come off as a unit. *Roegneria* spikelets separate into individual florets easily.

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Silky Wild Rye

Elymus villosus

POACEAE

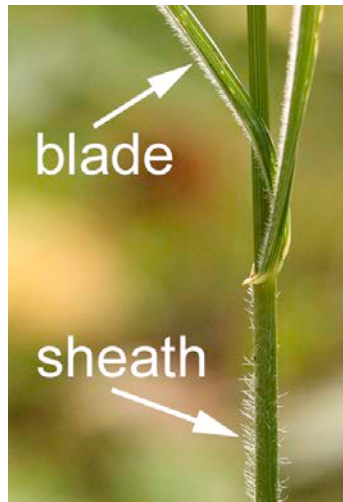


Photo: 8-9-18

Mama's Boy. Compared to other *Elymus* species, this native rye has silky, hairy leaves & sheaths, shorter spikelets of seeds, and typically ripens sooner. *E. virginicus* is upright (like wheat), *E. canadensis* arcs like a long frizzy ponytail. *E. riparius* has hairless sheaths.

Bottlebrush Grass

Hystrix patula

POACEAE

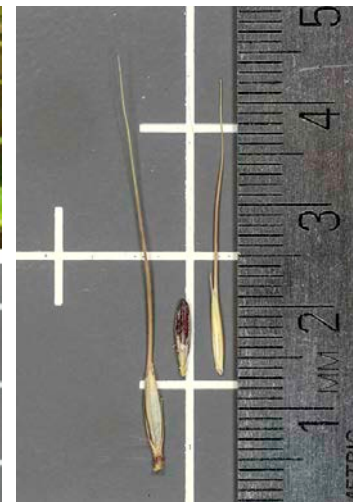
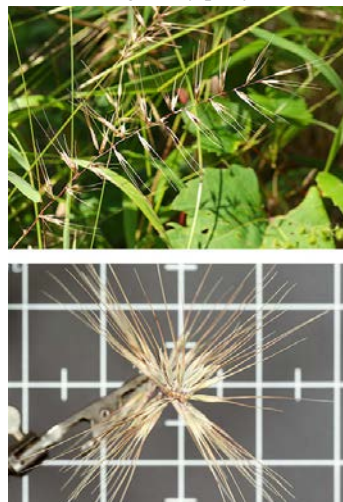


Photo: 8-16-17

Mama's Boy. A staple in woodland restoration and ideal for group workdays due to the clearly unique "bottle brush" forming an X from above. Strip by hand but wear gloves; the knobs where the seeds attach can be rough if collecting a large quantity.

Slender Satin Grass

Muhlenbergia tenuiflora

POACEAE



Photo: 8-30-17

This rare grass lives on morainic bluffs & ravines. It is well named; everything about this plant is slender and delicate. Collect when beige.