

## Andropogon gerardii 'Dancing Wind' Dancing Wind Big Blue Stem

Andropogon gerardii 'Dancing Wind' (Dancing Wind Big Blue Stem) is a stately prairie grass that provides strong vertical structure and form in the garden year round. Compared to the straight native, this cultivar is slightly shorter and produces a much more vibrant display of fall color. From late summer through early winter, the tall blades of grass and architectural seed heads appear to dance in the wind, bringing movement and flow. Big Blue Stem is a warm-season grass with fresh green foliage in late spring that transitions from yellow-green in summer to bright, fiery red in fall. It is nicknamed "turkey foot" because its distinctive fall seed heads resemble the splayed toes of a turkey's foot. The foliage and interesting seed heads remain upright until the first heavy snow. The straight native species is a host plant for several species of skipper butterflies, and the seeds and foliage support birds and mammals. Pairs well with summer-blooming prairie plants like Butterfly Milkweed and Tall Coreopsis, and provides support for tall fall blooming plants like New England Aster.

**Botanical Name:** Andropogon gerardii 'Dancing Wind'

**Common Name:** Dancing Wind Big Blue Stem

**Family:** Poaceae

**Nativity:** Great Lakes Native

**USDA Zone:** 4 to 9

**Light Type:** Full Sun

**Soil Type:** Loam, Clay, Sand

**Soil Preferences:** Grows taller in moist soils, but is also more likely to flop; well-drained

**Soil Moisture:** Dry, Moist

**Typical height (ft):** 4.5'-5.5'

**Typical width (ft):** 2.5'-3'

**Foliage:** Changes color seasonally: Yellow-green, blue green, hints of red

**Bloom Time:** July, August

**Bloom:** Not showy (wind-pollinated), but orange-yellow

**Ecological features:** Deep roots provide erosion control; butterflies can overwinter in litter at base; small mammals and songbirds eat the seeds in fall and winter.

**Tolerance of:** Erosion, Air Pollution, Deer, Salt, Heat

**Additional notes:** Dense clump grasses provide nesting sites for birds and overwintering habitat for butterflies. Limited nursery availability, but other varieties are available. **Companion plants:** Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*), Tall Coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*), Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*), Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

**For more information see:**

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=439688&isprofile=0&>

[https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantcollections/plantfinder/andropogon\\_gerardii\\_dancing\\_wind--dancing\\_wind\\_big\\_bluestem](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantcollections/plantfinder/andropogon_gerardii_dancing_wind--dancing_wind_big_bluestem)

<https://patents.justia.com/patent/PP26892>

**Images of Andropogon gerardii 'Dancing Wind'**



Dancing-Wind-INT-790x1024.jpg

Dancing in the Wind



8807fc-300.jpg Seeing Red, fall color



bigbluestemgp5x675.jpeg Trail flanked by Big Blue Stem



bigbluestemdancingwind.jpeg  
Feathery Heights

**Image choices for narrative:**

- Dancing-Wind-INT-790x1024.jpg Dancing in the Wind
- bigbluestemdancingwind.jpeg Feathery heights