

Schizachyrium scoparium 'Smoke Signal' Smoke Signal Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium 'Smoke Signal' (Smoke Signal Little Bluestem) is a 4-season, ornamental bunchgrass with fine-textured, strongly vertical foliage that adds height and seasonal interest. This warm-season grass emerges in late spring with blue-green foliage that forms very dense mounds growing 1.5-2' tall and wide. In late summer, the bunches transition from a rounded, spiked form to strongly vertical as red-burgundy blades gain height, reaching 3-4' tall. The inconspicuous flowers bloom from August to September and soon transition to tan, fluffy, arching seed heads that catch the late summer light. The fall foliage is stunning as it takes on deep scarlet to reddish-purple tones from late summer to fall, maintaining its upright stature into winter. Colors provide intense, showy seasonal interest and fluffy, tan seed heads persist through winter. Seed heads provide food for birds and the bunched foliage and litter provide overwintering habitat for queen bumblebees and butterfly larva. Shines in mixed plantings, meadows and prairies and the deep roots provide erosion control. This plant prefers full sun and well-drained soils. Good tolerance of drought, heat, deer, and salt combined with a tidy form make it a good choice for urban plantings.

Botanical Name: Schizachyrium scoparium 'Smoke Signal'

Common Name: Smoke Signal Little Bluestem

Family: Poaceae

Nativity: Great Lake Native

USDA Zone: 3 to 9

Light Type: Full Sun

Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sand

Soil Preferences: Prefers poor, infertile soils; well-drained

Soil Moisture: Dry to Moist

Typical height (ft): 3-4' Foliage (1.5-2' tall; seed heads extend above to 3-4' total height)

Typical width (ft): 1.5-2'

Foliage: Blue Green with streaks of red to maroon; deep maroon fall color

Bloom Time: August, September

Bloom: Green, purplish-red; inconspicuous, wind-pollinated

Ecological features: deep roots provide erosion control; clump grasses provide overwintering habitat for bees and butterfly larva; seeds attract small songbirds and game birds in fall and winter.

Tolerance of: Drought, deer, salt, heat

Additional notes: Performs poorly in soils that are too wet, may sprawl; warm-season grass; clump grasses provide overwintering habitat for bees and other pollinators

Companion plants: Asters (Symphyotrichum spp.), Coneflowers (Echinacea spp.), Blazing Stars (Liatris spp.), Bonesets (Eupatorium spp.), Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardii), Purple Lovegrass (Eragrostis spectabilis), Indian Grass (Sorghastrum nutans), Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis)

For more information see:

<https://www.waltersgardens.com/variety.php?ID=SCHSS>

<http://www.perennialresource.com/variety.php?ID=SCHSS>

<https://www.perennials.com/plants/schizachyrium-scoparium-smoke-signal.html>

<https://sugarcreekgardens.com/schizachyrium-scoparium-smoke-signal-little-bluestem/>

<http://hoffmannursery.com/plants/details/schizachyrium-scoparium-smoke-signal-PPAF>

Images of Schizachyrium scoparium 'Smoke Signal'



Schizachyrium Smoke Signal_1.jpg
early summer form



6SCHSMOS.jpg
late-season form



DETA2-3274.jpg
late fall and winter interest



ae67aa77aadb40242dd755045116e3c0.jpg
in garden context

Image choices for narrative:

Schizachyrium Smoke Signal_1.jpg -- early summer form

6SCHSMOS.jpg -- late-season form