

Prairie Dropseed Grass, *Sporobolus heterolepis* in Your Landscape

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Prairie dropseed is a perennial grass species native to Minnesota and the upper Midwest that is commonly found in tallgrass prairie remnant habitats. It is an excellent choice for both the garden and for landscape restoration projects.

Prairie dropseed is an especially important native grass species as it supports several species of native butterflies and moths. It is an essential larval food for the noctuid moth (*Anicla tenuescens*), the powesheik skipperling (*Oarisma Poweshiek*), and the Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*). Additionally, it is essential as a nest building site for the Dakota skipper. Both the Dakota skipper and the powesheik skipperling are listed as endangered species on the Minnesota List of Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern Species.



Photo by Mary Meyer

photo caption: A small skipper butterfly rests on ribbon grass at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

Prairie dropseed is an ideal addition to any garden or home landscape as it is a very attractive, small, bunch-forming grass. It has fine-texture blades giving it a graceful habit. Its long flowering seed heads have a pinkish-brown color, and the foliage turns a golden color that last well into the winter, adding year-round interest to the garden. It is mildly fragrant while flowering, with a scent reminiscent of coriander or cumin.



Photo by Mary Meyer

Prairie dropseed is a winter hardy, deep-rooted grass that prefers full-sun, and a well-drained soil. Like many native grasses it is a low maintenance plant requiring no supplemental nutrients, and is very drought tolerant once established.

By planting prairie dropseed, and other native grasses, into your garden or landscape restoration project you are providing a host of ecological benefits. These benefits include a reduction in soil erosion, an increase in organic material in the soil, and crucial habitat for many native songbirds, pollinators, and butterflies.