

Indian grass *Sorghastrum nutans*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Liliopsida

Order: Cyperales

Family: Poaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Indian grass is a perennial plant. In its early growth, this plant resembles big bluestem. Its leaves attach to the stem at about a 45 degree angle. A leaf is about one-half inch wide, narrowing or tapering where it joins the stem. Flowers appear yellow due to the long, yellow anthers. Small spikes of flowers are borne in pairs, one of which is sessile and contains both male and female reproductive structures. These spikelets are borne in plumelike heads. The fertile spikelets end in a bristle that is about four times as long as the fruit. The fruit is a grain. Indian grass may attain a height of four to six feet.

BEHAVIORS

Indian grass may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in open woods, fields and moist prairies. This perennial grass begins growing about the first of May each year. Flowers are produced from August through October. This plant is an important food source for grazing animals of the prairie.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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