

EASTERN GAMAGRASS

DESCRIPTION

Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) is a warm-season grass that is native to Louisiana. The culms form bunches, making it a good selection as an ornamental grass in the landscape. This grass grows 3 to 6 feet in height and flowers in early spring with male and female flowers

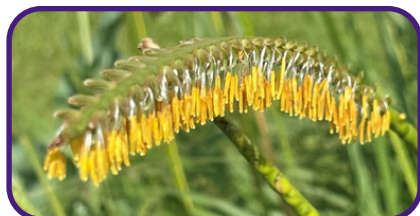
on the same plant (monoecious). Seeds are produced from May through July. These edible seeds are valuable to wildlife and livestock as a forage food. This grass can grow in a wide range of soils, including acidic soils.



IDENTIFICATION

Eastern gamagrass has a glabrous or smooth texture. Leaves are green to yellow-green and lighter on the underside of the leaf. The tips of the leaf come to a point. Seed heads are composed of one to three flower stalks. The male flower produces attractive bright yellow-

orange stamens, and the female flowers along the same inflorescence are red to brown or purple in color. The male flowers are attached to the upper part of the inflorescence above the female flowers to allow for self-pollination. Eastern gamagrass produces deep fibrous roots.



Left: Eastern gamagrass seed/edible kernels.

Above: Eastern gamagrass planted in the landscape at LSU Hilltop Arboretum (*Tripsacum dactyloides*).
Photos by Jennifer Blanchard

GROWING CONDITIONS



SOIL TYPE:

Grows in a range of types from sand to clay soils.



SOIL PH:

Prefers soil with a pH of 6 to 8. Always follow soil test recommendations to achieve desired soil pH. Can tolerate some infrequent flooding. Classified as a facultative wetland plant.



LIGHT:

Grows in full sun to partly shaded areas.



TIP: Before amending the soil, consider testing your soil at the [LSU AgCenter Soil Testing and Plant Analysis Laboratory](https://www.lsuagcenter.com/soil-testing) or contact your local extension office for more information.

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MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Gamagrass makes a good selection in the landscape because it requires little to no maintenance. You may want to remove the dead vegetation from time to time. It is, however, recommended to leave the biomass in the fall

and throughout winter to provide a habitat for insects and small animals. Cutting back or grooming of the plant is best done in the spring. Plants can be divided every three to four years in the spring.



FERTILIZATION:

Gamagrass is a native plant that does not require fertilization. However, if plants are not establishing well or soil nutrients are poor, you may add organic plant food or fertilizer in early spring or late winter. It is recommended that for new growth in spring, an application of nitrogen of 50 lbs./acre at the end of April or the beginning of May can be applied if used as corn silage or for grazing and harvest. A second application of nitrogen of 50 lbs./acre can be made after each harvest or grazing cycle. In the fall, after the final harvest, make a top-dressing application of phosphorus and potassium. This will aid in winter hardiness and resistance to disease. Follow soil test recommendations for proper fertility.



IRRIGATION:

Naturally occurring rainfall may provide sufficient water for maintaining gamagrass in normal years, but irrigation may need to be applied to prevent plant water stress during drought periods.

ESTABLISHMENT METHODS

Eastern gamagrass can be established from seed using moist stratification for 1 ½ to 2 months. The tough outer seed coat delays germination, and scarification is recommended. The use of growth stimulation hormones such as gibberellic acid may help to increase the rate of germination. Plants can be propagated through division and transplanting. Native grass seed should be sown, or plants transplanted in the fall.

WILDLIFE IMPORTANCE

Gamagrass is a larval host plant of byssus skipper (*Problema byssus*), as well as forage and cover for birds and deer.

REFERENCES

[Tripsacum dactyloides](http://www.wildflower.org) (Eastern gamagrass) | Native Plants of North America (wildflower.org)

http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/grasses/plants/gama_grass.htm

<https://npn.rngr.net/renderNPNProtocolDetails?selectedProtocolIds=poaceae-tripsacum-1736&referer=wildflower>



NATIVE GRASSES FOR THE LANDSCAPE

EASTERN GAMAGRASS

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