



Match the description with the photograph
(Answers at bottom of page)

DO YOU KNOW YOUR NATIVE GRASSES?

By Ashley Garrelts and Mae Smith

Prairie Junegrass
(*Koeleria macrantha* (Ledeb.) Schult.)

- I am a cool-season grass and one of the first grasses to green up in the spring.
- Native Americans fashioned brooms and paintbrushes from my leaves.
- I grow 6 inches to 2 feet tall.
- I have erect seed heads that are dense, pale green to purplish spikes, tapered at both ends, and 2 to 5 inches long.

Sandberg bluegrass
(*Poa secunda* J. Presl)

- I am a cool-season grass found in the sagebrush communities of Wyoming's basins and foothills.
- I am a bunchgrass with numerous basal leaves, which are a deep blue-green and folded with keel-shaped tips.
- I have a strong fibrous root system but will occasionally form rhizomes.

Needleandthread
(*Hesperostipa comata* (Trin. & Rupr.) Barkworth)

- I am a cool-season grass with a mature height of 1 to 4 feet.
- I have 4- to 5-inch long, twisted thread-like awns (a stiff bristle), which arise from a sharp-pointed seed.
- Native American children used my seeds as toys and make-believe spears and arrows.

Indian ricegrass
(*Achnatherum hymenoides* (Roem. & Schult.) Barkworth)

- I am a cool-season bunch grass with many tightly rolled, slender leaves growing from the base giving me a slightly wiry appearance.
- I have round to elongated, black or brown seeds covered with a fringe of short, white hairs.

- My seeds are considered an excellent food source for birds, such as mourning doves, pheasants, and songbirds.
- I can be found on a wide range of soil types but prefer sandy-textured soils.

Western wheatgrass
(*Pascopyrum smithii* (Rydb.) A. Löve)

- I am a cool-season grass with coarse, bluish-green leaves with prominent veins.
- My stems arise singularly or in clusters of a few and reach mature heights of 1 to 3 feet.
- My seed spike is erect and 2 to 6 inches long.
- I am known for my ability to control erosion because of my strong rhizomatous root system.
- I am the Wyoming State Grass.

Blue grama
(*Bouteloua gracilis* (Willd. ex Kunth) Lag. ex Griffiths)

- I am a warm-season bunch grass found at lower elevations in Wyoming.
- I am a short grass, reaching only 10-12 inches in height.
- I have a uniquely curved, mature seed head that resembles human eyebrows.
- I do not tolerate dense shade, flooding, or acidic soils.

Inland saltgrass
(*Distichlis spicata* (L.) Greene)

- I am a warm-season rhizomatous grass found in basins along ponds, lakes, and dried flood plains.
- My male and female reproductive parts are found on different plants.
- I prefer saline and sodium affected soils.

A. Western wheatgrass, B. Needleandthread, C. Inland saltgrass, D. Prairie Junegrass, E. Sandberg bluegrass, F. Blue grama, G. Indian ricegrass

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