

BLUE HEAVEN®

Blue Heaven® is a University of Minnesota selection of native little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, from central Minnesota that is upright with red or maroon fall color and grows well in sunny or well-drained sites. Little bluestem is an important source of food and sometimes shelter for the larvae of 15 species of butterflies and moths that are found in the Upper Midwest (MN, SD, ND, IA, WI, IL, MI).



Dakota skipper larvae.

Caterpillar species that feed on little bluestem

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oslar's roadside skipper	<i>Amblyscirtes oslari</i> *
Arogos skipper	<i>Atrytone arogos</i>
Dusted skipper	<i>Atrytonopsis hianna</i>
Wood nymph	<i>Cercyonis pegala</i>
Cosmopterigidae moth	<i>Cosmopterix callichalca</i> *
Assiniboia skipper	<i>Hesperia assiniboia</i>
Dakota skipper	<i>Hesperia dacotae</i>
Leonard's skipper	<i>Hesperia leonardus</i>
Cobweb skipper	<i>Hesperia metea</i>
Ottoo skipper	<i>Hesperia ottoe</i>
Indian skipper	<i>Hesperia sassacus</i>
Swarthy skipper	<i>Nastra lherminier</i> *
Poweshiek skipperling	<i>Oarisma poweshiek</i>
Crossline skipper	<i>Polites origenes</i>
Gelechiidae moth	<i>Stereomita andropogonis</i> *

*Found in the Upper Midwest, but not found in Minnesota.



Photos on Front
 Blue Heaven® little bluestem courtesy of Mary Meyer; Dakota skipper larvae, courtesy of the Minnesota Zoo.
Right from top: Skipper butterfly on calamagrostis; Skipper butterfly; Skipper on baptisia; Skipper on ribbon grass.

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)

Caterpillar species that feed on big bluestem

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oslar's roadside skipper	<i>Amblyscirtes oslari</i> *
Delaware skipper	<i>Anatrytone logan</i>
Arogos skipper	<i>Atrytone arogos</i>
Dusted skipper	<i>Atrytonopsis hianna</i>
Wheat head armyworm	<i>Faronta diffusa</i>
Dakota skipper	<i>Hesperia dacotae</i>
Cobweb skipper	<i>Hesperia metea</i>
Ottoo skipper	<i>Hesperia ottoe</i>
Indian skipper	<i>Hesperia sassacus</i>
Newman's borer	<i>Meropleon ambifusca</i>
Golden skipper	<i>Problema byssus</i> *

*Found in the Upper Midwest, but not found in Minnesota.



Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)

Caterpillar species that feed on blue grama

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oslar's roadside skipper	<i>Amblyscirtes oslari</i> *
Simius roadside skipper	<i>Notamblyscirtes simius</i> *
Mead's wood nymph	<i>Cercyonis meadii</i> *
Blake's tiger moth	<i>Grammia blakei</i> *
Assiniboia skipper	<i>Hesperia assiniboia</i>
Common branded skipper	<i>Hesperia comma</i>
Leonard's skipper	<i>Hesperia leonardus</i>
Ottoo skipper	<i>Hesperia ottoe</i>
Pahaska skipper	<i>Hesperia pahaska</i> *
Uncas skipper	<i>Hesperia uncas</i>
Ridings' satyr	<i>Neominois ridingsii</i> *
Garita skipperling	<i>Oarisma garita</i>
Rhesus skipper	<i>Polites rhesus</i>

*Found in the Upper Midwest, but not found in Minnesota.



Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Caterpillar species that feed on prairie dropseed

Common Name	Scientific Name
Noctuid moth	<i>Anicla tenuescens</i>
Noctuid moth	<i>Dichagyris reliqua</i> *
Dakota skipper	<i>Hesperia dacotae</i>
Leonard's skipper	<i>Hesperia leonardus</i>
Ottoo skipper	<i>Hesperia ottoe</i>
Poweshiek skipperling	<i>Oarisma poweshiek</i>

*Found in the Upper Midwest, but not found in Minnesota.



Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Caterpillar species that feed on sideoats grama

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oslar's roadside skipper	<i>Amblyscirtes oslari</i> *
Arogos skipper	<i>Atrytone arogos</i>
Assiniboia skipper	<i>Hesperia assiniboia</i>
Dakota skipper	<i>Hesperia dacotae</i>
Leonard's skipper	<i>Hesperia leonardus</i>
Ottoo skipper	<i>Hesperia ottoe</i>
Poweshiek skipperling	<i>Oarisma poweshiek</i>

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Lake Sedge (*Carex lacustris*)

Caterpillar species that feed on lake sedge

Common Name	Scientific Name
Dion skipper	<i>Euphyes dion</i>
Dukes' skipper	<i>Euphyes dukesi</i> *
Dun skipper	<i>Euphyes vestris</i>
Eyed brown	<i>Lethe eurydice</i>
Appalachian brown	<i>Lethe appalachia</i>
Broad-winged skipper	<i>Poanes viator</i>

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Skipper photos courtesy of Bryan Reynolds. Clockwise from top left: Arogos skipper; Ottoo skipper; Plains branded skipper; Dion skipper; Garita skipperling.
 Big bluestem, blue grama, prairie dropseed and sideoats grama photos courtesy of Mary Meyer. Lake sedge photo courtesy of Dave Hansen.

Larvae Shelters

Butterflies in the *Hesperia* genus, also known as grass skippers, build shelters within grasses during their larval life stage. Larvae weave grass blades together with silk to create the shelters. Some even feed from within the shelter, cutting off grass blades and returning to their shelter to eat. The shelters protect the caterpillars from predators and the elements until they pupate and become butterflies.



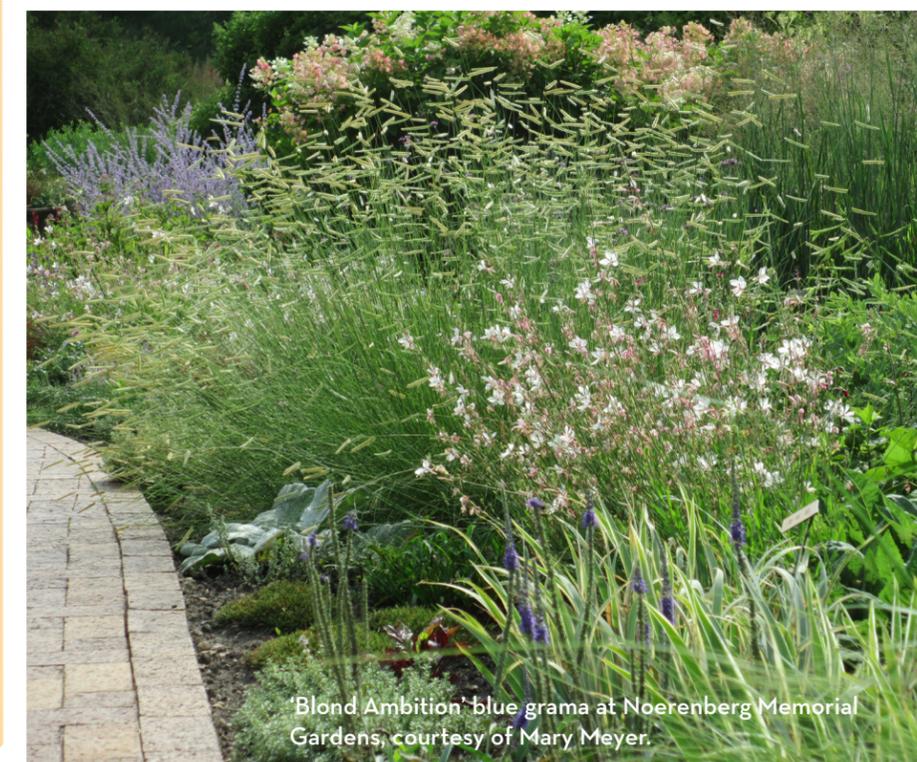
Dakota skipper larva shelter in a prairie dropseed plant, courtesy of Diane Narem.

Lepidoptera Friendly Management

Many of these butterflies overwinter as larvae at or just below the soil surface near the bases of native bunchgrasses. This makes them vulnerable to fire management. Prescribed burns can kill overwintering larvae by direct contact or by dehydration caused by the heat from the fire. If you suspect that you have overwintering larvae in your native grasses or prairie, cut back or mow your grasses instead of burning. Another strategy is to only burn a portion of your grass planting, leaving other areas as refuges safe from fire.



Native grass cutting, courtesy of Mary Meyer.



"Blond Ambition" blue grama at Noerenberg Memorial Gardens, courtesy of Mary Meyer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Benefits of Native Grasses: <http://grasses.cfans.umn.edu>

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