

# grasses, sedges, rushes, oh my!

*a study of particularly high functioning perennial plants  
for the saint louis garden*

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# PLANT SELECTIONS

# Grasses, Sedges and Rushes

*“Sedges have edges, and rushes are round, but grasses have nodes from their tips to the ground.”*



grass



rush



sedge

# Grasses Overview

- 600 genera, 9000 species
- Widest distribution of flowering plants
- Grasses grow on every continent, and part of all major biomes
- Economically the most important
- Grasses are the primary food source for humans as well as for wild and domestic grazing animals.



Photo by Phil Bendle

**Andropogon gerardii**  
**Common Name: big bluestem**  
**(warm season grass)**





**Bouteloua curtipendula, sideoats grama  
(warm season grass)**





**Chasmanthium latifolium**

**Common Name: river oats;  
northern sea oats  
(cool season grass)**



**Elymus hystrix**  
**common name:**  
**bottle brush grass**  
**(cool season grass)**





**Eragrostis spectabilis**  
**Common name:**  
**purple love grass**  
**(warm season grass)**



**Panicum virgatum**  
**Common Name: switchgrass**  
**(warm season grass)**



# Panicum Goodness

- Switchgrass is essential for wildflower meadows intended to mimic North American prairies. It can be used to add fall color to naturalistic borders and woodland-edge gardens. It is also a great wildlife plant. Switchgrass holds up well under heavy snow and provides good fall-winter cover for rabbits and other small mammals, ducks, pheasants, and quail. The seeds are eaten by turkeys, pheasants, quail, doves, and songbirds. Switchgrass prairies are favored nesting sites for pheasants, quail, greater prairie chickens, and sharp tailed grouse. White tailed deer and other native ungulates paw up the rhizomes for winter survival food.







**Schizachyrium scoparium**  
**Common Name:**  
**little bluestem**  
**(warm season grass)**



**Sorghastrum nutans**  
**Common Name:**  
**Indian grass**  
**(warm season grass)**





**Sporobolus heterolepis**  
**Common Name:**  
**prairie dropseed**  
**(warm season grass)**



# Grass Maintenance

- Cut back in late winter/early spring (leaving declined plant for habitat, aesthetic, and ecological function.)
- Feed when actively growing, avoid feeding too late in season. (Cool season slows in heat.)
  - Light/Moderate Feeders
    - Carex, Schizachyrium
  - Moderate/Heavy Feeders
    - Calamagrostis, Panicum

# Sedges Overview

- Cyperaceae Family
- Genera of Carex has more than 3600 species
- First introduced by Carl Linnaeus in 1753
- Branch of botany called caricology, which is devoted to study of Carex.
- Largest genera of vascular plants, can be found in every ecosystem in the world
- Sedge, comes from Latin word “secare” which means to cut. (refers to stems are triangular in cross section)
- Other characterists: distinctive inflorescences, and lack of nodes.
- Seeds are eaten by many kinds of wildlife, food source for caterpillars and mammals. They are cover and nesting sites for birds and other animals.
- Three kinds: sedges from Asia, sedges from New Zealand, and North American native sedges.
- North American native sedges are very important plant for green infrastructure, there is one to fit every set of cultural conditions.





No. 105.

No. 107.







There are sedges for  
every condition:  
moist shade, dry shade,  
moist sun, dry sun

Carex albicans,  
oak sedge  
(dry shade, 1' – 1.5')





Carex crinata,  
fringed sedge  
(moist shade, 1' – 3')



*Carex eburnea*,  
bristle-leaf sedge  
(dry shade, .5' – 1')





Carex jamesii, James' sedge  
(moist shade, 1')





*Carex lupulina*,  
hop sedge  
(moist sun, 1' – 2')



Carex grayi,  
Gray's sedge  
(moist sun, 2' – 3')





*Carex muskingumensis*, palm sedge  
(moist sun/pt. shade, 2' – 3')





*Carex pensylvanica*,  
Pennsylvania sedge  
(dry shade, .5' – 1')





*Carex praegracilis*,  
tollway sedge  
(Moist Sun, 2' – 3')





Carex shortiana,  
Short's sedge  
(moist sun, 1.5' – 2')





*Carex socialis*,  
social sedge  
(moist shade, 1' – 2')



Carex typhina,  
cattail sedge  
(moist shade, 1' – 2')



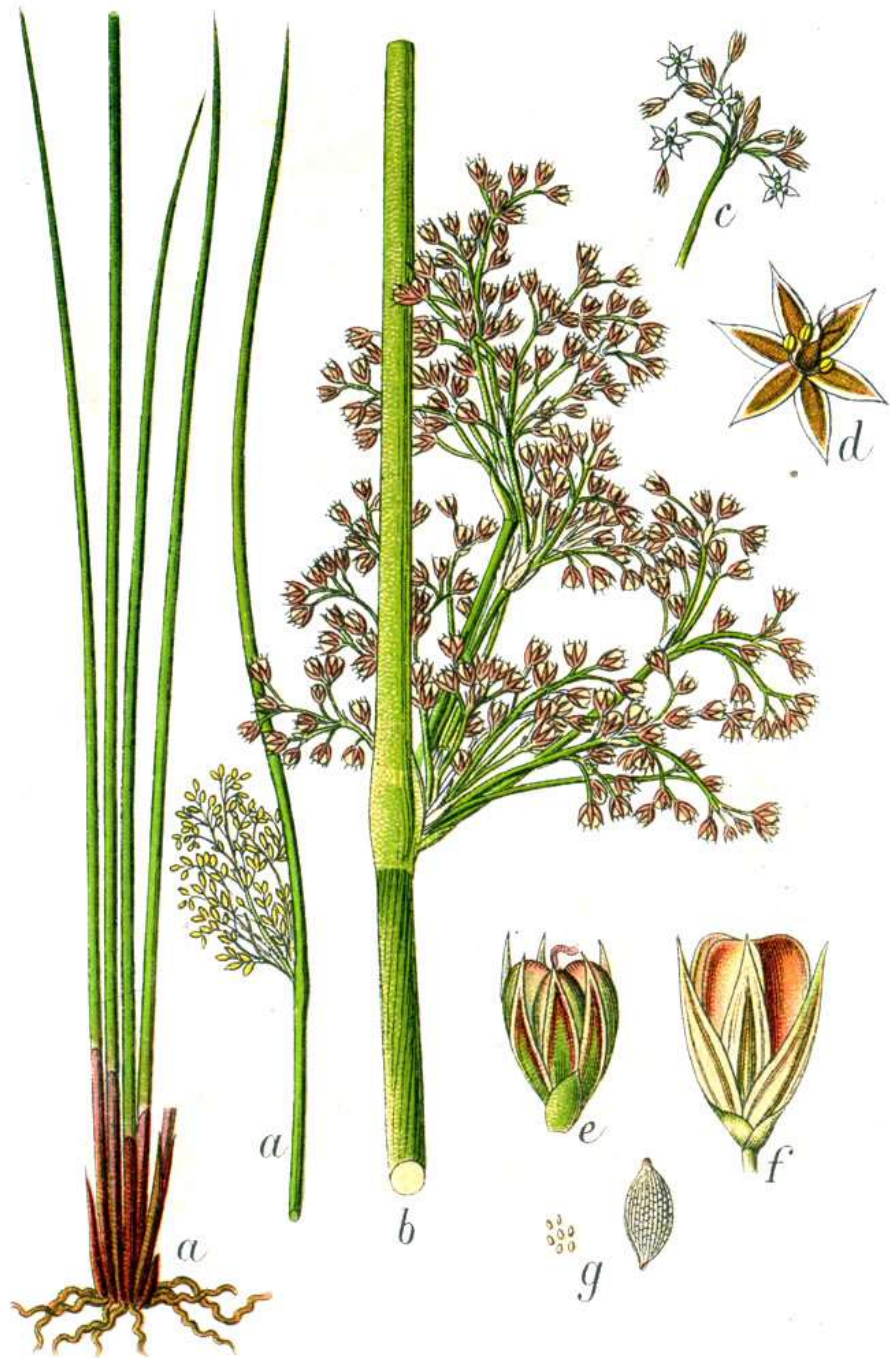


*Carex vulpinoidea*,  
fox sedge  
(moist sun, 1' – 3')





Rushes





**Juncus effusus, soft rush  
(moist sun)**

