

LITTLE BLUESTEM PRAIRIE ESTABLISHMENT USING A TECHNIQUE OF CLOSE MOWING FOR TWO GROWING SEASONS

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Abstract: We planted a little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) prairie on .7 acres of soybean stubble in 1999. The area was mowed down to a height of 1.5 inches for two growing seasons whenever the farm field annual weeds approached seed maturity. We refer to this as the lawn mower method of prairie establishment. This technique controlled the re-establishment of annual weeds and allowed light to reach the prairie plants. We also spot-sprayed perennial weeds, which came in from airborne seeds such as Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*). Upon seeing the very high recruitment of the little bluestem and the forbs seeded, we replicated the method with reduced seeding rates in the fall of 2001 on 2.4 acres of adjacent soybean stubble. We also mowed the second area closely for two growing seasons. Following the two years of mowing, both fields were burned annually until 2007. In 2007, neither field was burned and then in 2008 both fields were burned in order to determine the stability of the planted prairie under the more natural conditions of not burning every year. We believe the close mowing technique has allowed us to accomplish our goal of establishing a 3.1 acre prairie buffer adjacent to a little bluestem dominated Illinois Nature Preserve using only the plant species found in the high quality native plant community.

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Key Words / Search Terms:
Schizachyrium scoparium ¶
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Presentation Needs: slide projector¶
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Appropriate Session: Prairie Restoration