

Bushy Bluestem

Andropogon glomeratus

Description

Bushy bluestem is an erect, tufted perennial grass that may grow to 3 feet (1 m) tall. The leaves have narrow, elongate blades approximately 3/8 of an inch (3-6 mm) wide, and tend to turn copper to orange in the fall. The individual flowers are minute and are grouped in small spikelets that are surrounded by fluffy, gray-white bristles. Numerous groupings of the spikelets are aggregated together to form a bushy terminal cluster, which give the plant its name.

Distribution & Habitat

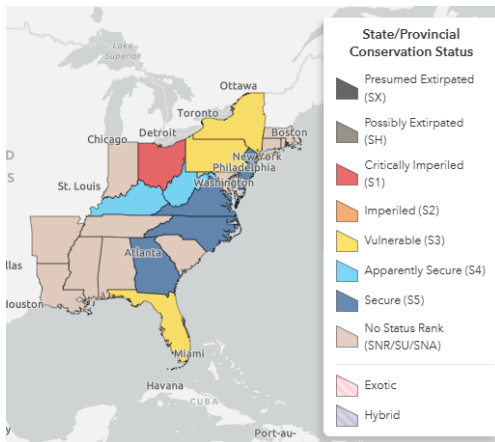
Bushy bluestem has a range across the continent in the southern states, with an extension northeastward into southern New England. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in scattered locations, particularly in the southern counties. The bushy bluestem grows in a variety of damp to wet open places, clearings, and sometimes in human-created disturbed ground.



Photo source: John Kunsman, PNHP

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Conservation Considerations

The populations of bushy bluestem in the state are threatened by human-related habitat loss, natural succession, invasive species, and the indiscriminate spraying of herbicides. Given the preference of the species for open habitats, active management – such as fire, mowing, or invasive species removal – is often required to maintain the proper successional stage at sites where it grows.

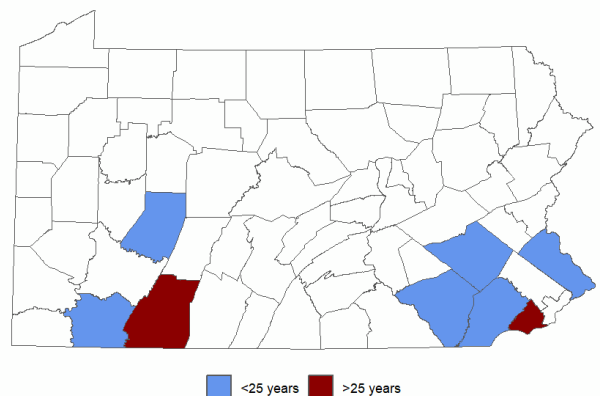
NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5T5 – Globally secure; **S4** – Apparently secure in Pennsylvania

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers bushy bluestem to be a species of special concern, based on the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status of Undetermined and has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Rare by PABS. About 15 populations are currently known from the state.

Bushy Bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*)



Blue: <25 years Red: >25 years

References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.