

Tall Grama, Side-oats Grama

Bouteloua curtipendula

Description

Tall grama is a perennial grass that grows from 20 to 40 inches (0.5 to 1 meter) tall. This attractive species grows from slender rhizomes. The leaves are linear and elongate, rough above and on the edges, smooth or finely hairy beneath, and about 1/4 inch (2 to 7 mm) wide. The flowers are arranged on a narrow, unbranched inflorescence which has 15 to 50 spikelets that tend to hang down to one side. When the flowers bloom in August and September, bright orange anthers may be seen dangling from the spikelets.



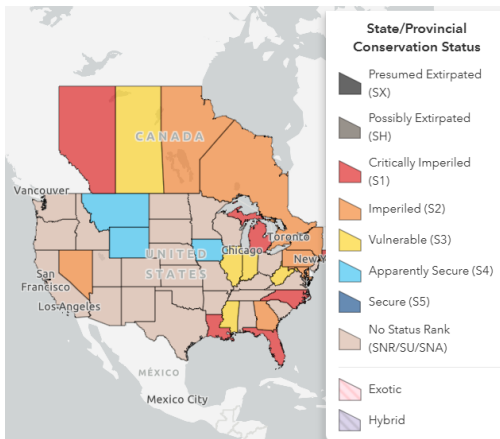
Photo source: Charlie Eichelberger (PNHP)

Distribution and Habitat

Tall grama can be found throughout most of the United States. In Pennsylvania, most of the known occurrences are in the central and southeastern counties. The species grows in dry, open, rocky places, especially on limestone and serpentine geology.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



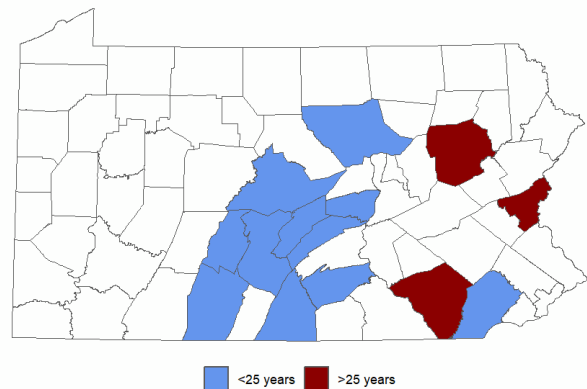
Conservation Considerations

Maintenance of the known occurrences of tall grama usually requires special management, such as periodic prescribed burning or mowing, in order to prevent succession from proceeding and to keep exotic species and woody plants under control.

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers tall grama to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened.

Tall Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)



NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S2 – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania: Annotated Checklist and Atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2000. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia