

prairie dropseed

Sporobolus heterolepis

FEATURES

Prairie dropseed is also known as northern dropseed. This perennial herb is considered to be a mid-height grass. It has narrow, drooping, simple, entire leaves. Each leaf may be two feet long. The final one-third of each leaf (away from the main part of the plant) tends to become dry. The plant grows in a clump and resembles a water fountain. Flowers are produced on a plumelike structure. Each spikelet contains one flower. The fruit is a grain. Prairie dropseed may attain a height of two to three feet.

BEHAVIORS

Prairie dropseed is most commonly found in the northern one-half of Illinois, although it does grow in the rest of the state. Moist prairies, dry soil, dry woods, fens, fields and areas along railroad tracks are its main habitats. Flowers are produced from August through September. Wind is the agent of pollination. Prairie dropseed is an important food source for grazing animals of the prairie. The fruit is eaten by a variety of wildlife species.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Magnoliophyta
Class: Liliopsida
Order: Cyperales
Family: Poaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE





Aquatic Habitats

wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie