

Caucasian bluestem, (an Old World Bluestem), is a warm-season perennial grass native to subtropical Asia and Africa.



Caucasian bluestem

All the grass showing in the fenced area with the trees is Caucasian bluestem.

Brought to the United States in the early 1900s as a forage grass and as erosion control, it is less palatable to cattle than our native warm-season grasses and not as nutritious, but its use is promoted due to its ability to withstand close grazing.



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However, it has proven to be highly invasive and its use should be strongly discouraged where local native grasses normally flourish, particularly in the unique Tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills.



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This invasive bluestem alters soil chemistry and biota, suppressing the growth of native grasses. It aggressively outcompetes native plants and, once established, is almost impossible to eradicate.



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A landscape photograph showing a grassy hillside under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a paved road with a dashed yellow center line runs horizontally, bordered by a metal guardrail. The hillside is covered in dry, golden-brown grass. A few bare trees and some evergreens are visible on the ridge in the background. The text "Caucasian bluestem" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Caucasian bluestem



Caucasian bluestem is a perennial, clump-forming, small, blue-gray grass, with flowering stems to 3 feet tall. It forms dense tufts of smooth, blue-green leaf blades, to 12 inches long and less than ¼ inch wide with a thickened mid-vein. The nodes are purple-tinged and may be smooth or with short hairs. It blooms far earlier than our native bluestems. The inflorescence is silvery and reddish purple, with side branches that are shorter than the central stem (resembling a miniature version of Johnson grass, which blooms at the same time). Blooms late June through July.

Photo from [www.farmtalknewspaper.com](http://www.farmtalknewspaper.com) article:  
Caucasian bluestem: Invader or seasonal grazing gap  
filler?

by Samantha Athey  
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Shawnee County Weed Director John Welborn points out identifying characteristics of Caucasian bluestem.





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## Old World Bluestem Control Options

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- Spot treatment with glyphosate
- Wiping or wicking glyphosate
- Tillage and planting Roundup Ready crop
- Burn or mow prior to herbicide application
- Imazapyr treatment
- Renovation of OWB infested sites needs further study



Shawnee County Conservation District (SCCD) authored and promoted a resolution at the 2017 Kansas Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting that KACD identify and work with other agencies and partners to develop a public education program to help conservation districts, Kansas counties and municipalities and the Kansas Department of Transportation to identify and mitigate the spread of old world bluestem and other invasive species from roadside mowing.

The resolution passed.

Since then, SCCD's focus has regionalized to the Flint Hills. Because the Flint Hills make up 80% of the remaining Tallgrass prairie in North America, there is a vital environmental and economic benefit to keeping invasive species including Caucasian bluestem from overtaking the native grass. Workshops are in the planning stages.