



Blue Heaven™

Ornamental Grass

The University's first release of an ornamental grass, Blue Heaven™, is a unique form of little bluestem, a native prairie grass known for its tolerance of sites with dry soil and full sun. It is a great plant for low maintenance sustainable landscapes. The selection process began in 1995, with seed from Benton County and 30 other locations statewide.

Several characteristics make this carefully selected variety attractive through all seasons. It has a taller, more upright form (40–48 inches tall and 25–30 inches wide) than is typical of little bluestem. The colors of dark blue to burgundy summer foliage turning red to purple and violet in the fall are unique on a tall columnar plant. It flowers in September, and showy fall color extends into winter.

Research

The Ornamental Grass Collection at the University's Minnesota Landscape Arboretum includes more than 200 different ornamental and native grasses and is one of the largest in the United States. Plants are evaluated for winter survival, flowering time, self-seeding, invasiveness, and winter interest. Since the initial planting in 1987, about half of the original grasses, sedges, and rushes have proven hardy.

1987: 200 kinds of grasses form U of M grass collection

2008: Blue Heaven™ little bluestem released

Working for Bees



Since 1918, the University's Department of Entomology has maintained an internationally recognized

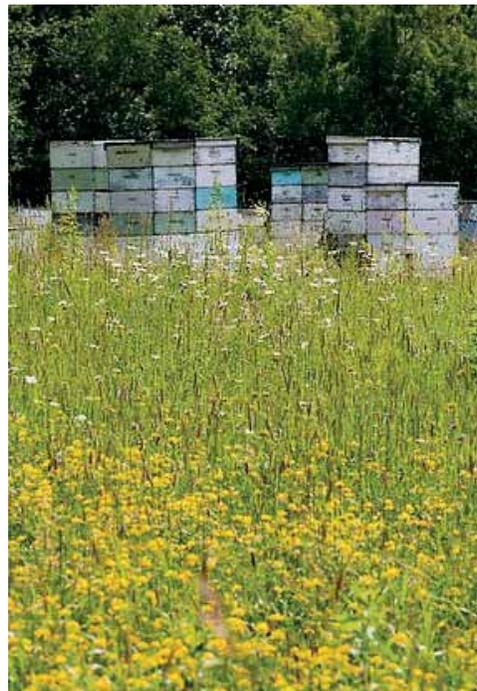
research, teaching, and outreach program on bees. Known today as the "Bee Lab," the goal of the research is to promote the health of bee pollinators.

Researchers have found several ways to reach this goal: 1) breeding better bees

like the "Minnesota Hygienic Bees;" 2) discovering and studying natural bee defenses like propolis; 3) reducing pesticide usage; 4) providing research discoveries to beekeepers; and 5) improving conservation and management of other pollinators to reduce the stress on bees.



In the winter of 2006, the honey bee population began to suffer steep declines. Since then, an average of 30% of all honey bee colonies die every winter. Beekeepers struggle to replace losses. U of M researchers are hard at work studying the causes and looking for solutions that will save the honey bee.



KNOW TO GROW

Bee Friendly Tips: For a bee-friendly garden, focus on a diversity of flowering plants. Colorful nectar-producing plants are ideal, such as asters, goldenrod, and sunflowers. Flowering fruits, vegetables, and herbs are also great choices. Bees need food throughout the season so look for long blooming varieties that will bloom at different times of the season (ideally April–September). Avoid pesticides and fungicides and let a few dandelions slip by—they are one of the earliest food sources for bees in April.