Caucasian bluestem and Bermudagrass are not native to North America and are at best marginally adapted to north Missouri. They are included in this publication mainly because of their ability to utilize large amounts of fertilizer. There are regions in north Missouri that produce large amounts of animal waste from confinement livestock operations. In these areas it is beneficial to have species available that can safely use large amounts of nutrients from animal waste. These species require careful site selection and proper management if they are to persist. They do not generally work well in mixtures and in most cases are best handled as single specie plantings.

The other warm-season grasses included in this publication are native to Missouri, have developed under this climatic regime and are therefore well adapted to the region. Big Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass and Eastern Gamagrass are especially well suited to north Missouri producing large yields of high quality summer forage for livestock when properly managed. Little bluestem and Sideoats Grama are better adapted to lower rainfall area but are appropriate for use where soils are thin and droughty and will provide diversity in mixtures.

The native species can be planted either as monoculures or blended into mixtures that best meet the manager’s goals. When planed for forage production it is helpful to remember that though all are warm-season grasses, the different species mature at different times during the year. Switchgrass and Eastern Gamagrass being the earliest followed by Big Bluestem then Indiangrass. Using some of each provides a longer, high quality grazing period. Also varieties originating in the north mature more quickly than varieties that originated in the south.

Native warm-season grasses have an upright growth that the grazing animal can readily access. If not managed properly they can easily be over grazed. Since most of there carbohydrate reserves are stored in the stem bases, at least eight inches of residual should remain following grazing.

Their bunchy growth habit provides unimpeded access under a protective canopy for ground nesting birds such as quail, pheasants, and prairie chickens. Being native these plants are an integral part of the ecosystem providing a home for native insects which become an important food source vital to successful brood rearing. In addition, Switchgrass and Little Bluestem both have a strong upright growth that remains upright providing cover throughout the winter.