

Bothriochloa barbinodis



Spreading the Prairie Love: Propagating Cane Bluestem (Bothriochloa barbinodis)

Cane Bluestem (*Bothriochloa barbinodis*), also known as Dixie Bluestem or Big Bluestem, is a beautiful and resilient grass native to North America. This adaptable species thrives in prairies, meadows, and even disturbed areas, boasting stunning bluish-green foliage that shimmers silver in the wind. While its ornamental value is undeniable, Cane Bluestem also provides excellent erosion control and serves as a valuable habitat and food source for wildlife.

Ready to invite this prairie gem into your garden? Here's a closer look at the most effective methods for propagating Cane Bluestem:

1. [Seed Propagation](#):

Cane Bluestem readily reproduces from seed, making it a cost-effective and rewarding propagation method.

- **Seed Collection:** The optimal time to collect Cane Bluestem seeds is in the fall when the fluffy, silver seed heads mature. Snip the seed heads with sharp shears and store them in a paper bag in a cool, dry location until you're ready to sow.
- **Sowing:** Cane Bluestem seeds benefit from a period of cold stratification to improve germination rates. You have two options:
 - **Direct Sowing:** In the late fall, sow seeds directly into prepared garden beds after the first frost. This allows them to undergo natural cold stratification over winter.
 - **Indoor Sowing:** For an early spring start, mimic natural stratification by mixing the seeds with damp vermiculite in a sealed plastic bag and storing them in the refrigerator for 6-8 weeks. Sow the chilled seeds in seed trays filled with a well-draining seed starting mix, lightly covering them with soil.
- **Planting Conditions:** Cane Bluestem thrives in full sun to partial shade and well-draining soil. Keep the soil consistently moist until the seedlings are established.
- **Germination:** Expect germination to occur within 2-4 weeks after sowing indoors or in the spring for direct-sown seeds.

2. Division:

For established Cane Bluestem clumps, division is an excellent way to thin out the plant and create new ones.

- **Timing:** The best time to divide Cane Bluestem is in early spring when new growth begins to emerge.
- **Process:** Carefully dig around the clump, ensuring you lift the entire root system. Using a sharp spade or garden knife, divide the clump into smaller sections, each with a good amount of roots and shoots.
- **Replanting:** Replant the divided sections immediately in

prepared garden beds, spacing them according to the desired density and watering them in thoroughly.

Tips for Success:

- **Patience is key:** Cane Bluestem can take a little time to establish, so don't be discouraged if you don't see rapid growth right away.
- **Water wisely:** While drought-tolerant once established, Cane Bluestem benefits from regular watering during its first year, especially during hot, dry periods.
- **Enjoy the show:** Once established, Cane Bluestem requires minimal maintenance. Sit back, relax, and enjoy the graceful beauty and movement this stunning grass brings to your garden.

Whether you choose to propagate Cane Bluestem from seed or division, you'll be welcoming a piece of the prairie ecosystem into your landscape. With minimal effort, you can enjoy the elegant beauty, ecological benefits, and low-maintenance nature of this remarkable grass for years to come.