

Spring 2007 Press Release, New Plants

## Blue Heaven™

Little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'MinnBlueA' Blue Heaven™ PP17310

Blue Heaven™ is a new, native ornamental grass to look for this spring at your favorite garden center. Grasses are popular, low maintenance ornamentals that add interest in their columnar form and soft, natural appearance. Blue Heaven™ is a new selection of little bluestem, a grass known for its tolerance for dry soil and full sun growing conditions. Blue Heaven™ was selected from a seedling population grown at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN. The parents of Blue Heaven™ came from Benton County in central Minnesota, USDA Hardiness Zone 3b (average annual minimum winter temperatures -30 to -35° F).

Blue Heaven™ is 40-48" tall with blue-grey foliage in the summer. In September the foliage turns to burgundy red with purple and violet highlights. The fall color lasts well into the November. Blue Heaven™ is a taller, more upright form than is typical of little bluestem. Small, fluffy white flowers form in August and September, but the showy fall color is the highlight of this grass with interest extending into the winter. Blue Heaven™ remains upright and does not fall down or 'lodge' as some grasses tend to do.

### CULTURAL INFORMATION

Blue Heaven™ little bluestem prefers drier, well drained sites. Sandy soil is a good site for little bluestem, although it will tolerate heavy clay soil. Full sun is ideal for little bluestem. No additional fertilizer is necessary in growing this selection and fertilizer is not recommended. Water plants well the first month after planting, then allow them to dry out between waterings. After the first year, you should not need to water Blue Heaven™.

Blue Heaven™ can be planted in the fall or spring. Fall plantings do best if allowed plants have 1 month to establish roots before freezing weather sets in, for the north this usually means planting in September. Spring planting can occur anytime the soil can be worked, usually in late April or early May. Summer planting is fine, as long as plants are watered until established.

### LIFE CYCLE

Blue Heaven™ will begin growing in late May and the summer foliage is light blue in color. In late July and early August taller flower stems will appear, also blue in color. In late August the plants will begin to turn a dark burgundy color and small white airy flowers appear along the stems. During September and October the foliage is dark burgundy fading to red and pink as the fall continues. The plants

slowly turn to tan and remain upright during the winter unless a heavy, wet snow comes early. Birds will find cover and seeds to eat through the winter on your little bluestem plants. You will enjoy seeing them sway in the winter breeze. In early spring, March or April, cut back the previous years growth to ground level, allowing light to penetrate the crown, which will help new foliage to quickly appear.

Ask for Blue Heaven™ little bluestem at your favorite garden center and enjoy growing this native, low maintenance grass in your garden.