



Old Switch Panic Grass

Panicum virgatum var. *spissum*

NS General Status Rank: Secure

GRASS-LIKE : GRAMINOIDS



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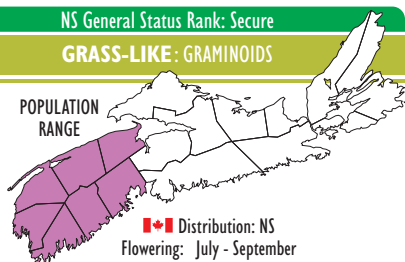
Flowering spikelets

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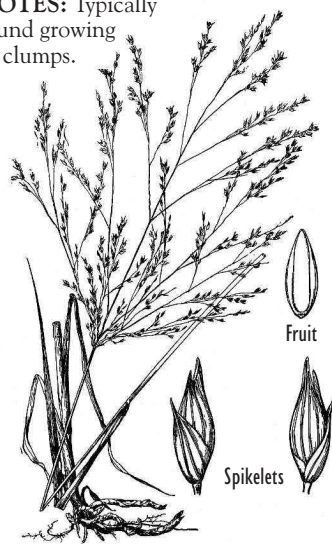


Spikelets

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SIZE: 60 cm to over 1 m tall.
LEAVES: Long and narrow, 20-50 cm long and up to 1.5 cm wide. Dense silky hairs are present at the base of the leaf where it touches the stem.
STEM: Straight, green, and smooth.
FLOWERS: Pyramid-shaped branched cluster of flowers (panicle) that is two to three times as long as wide, 20-50 cm long, and composed of many small spikelets. The spikelets are oval and 2.2-5.5 mm long.
FRUITS: Small dry grains enclosed in the spikelets
NOTES: Typically found growing in clumps.



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Habitat:

Sand or gravel lakeshores, wetlands (bogs) and the upper edges of salt marshes.

Similar Species: Redtop Panic Grass (*Panicum rigidulum* var. *pubescens*, page 78), Eaton's Panic Grass (*Dichanthelium spretum*, page 67) are both smaller and have shorter and much narrower panicles. Redtop Panic Grass also has a flattened stem at the base. Spreading Panic Grass (*Panicum dichotomiflorum* var. *puritanorum*, page 77) has narrower spikelets with stems that are most often reclining. *Panicum virgatum* var. *spissum* is the only confirmed variety in NS.

Interesting Point: The seeds (grains) from panic grasses are often an important food source for birds such as sparrows and blackbirds.