



### Needle and Thread Grass

*Hesperostipa comata*

**Height:** 12 - 24 in.

**Description:** Perennial tufted bunch grass with 4 - 5 in. awn that when it detaches with the pointed seed it resembles a needle and thread.

**Habitat:** Well-drained grasslands

**Blooms:** June

**Viewing:** West to central



### Sand Bluestem

*Andropogon hallii*

**Height:** 36 - 96 in.

**Description:** Perennial tufted bunch grass with tufted seed-heads also known as "Turkey Foot."

**Habitat:** Sandy soils

**Blooms:** July - October

**Viewing:** West, especially the Sandhills



### Prairie Sandreed

*Calamovilfa longifolia*

**Height:** 18 - 72 in.

**Description:** Perennial, tall coarse grass, pale to yellow in color.

**Habitat:** Sandy soil

**Blooms:** July - September

**Viewing:** Statewide, except SE corner



### Prairie Love Grass

*Eragrostis trichodes*

**Height:** 24 - 42 in.

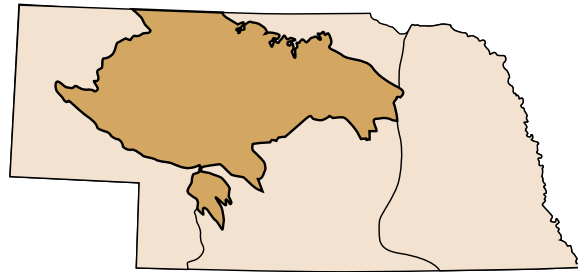
**Description:** Perennial bunch-grass, great diffuse seed head that is half the size of the plant.

**Habitat:** Sandy soil

**Blooms:** July - September

**Viewing:** Primarily in the Sandhills, occasionally east

## Sandhills Region



The Sandhills region in Nebraska contains the largest area of stabilized grass covered dunes in the western hemisphere. Of the 13 million acres, over a million of these are wetlands. There are 1,600 Sandhill lakes, comprising around 80,000 surface acres of water. These wetland areas are important for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, providing much-needed habitat. This area also sits directly atop the Ogallala aquifer, for which the wetlands play an important role in retaining and filtering the water.

This area receives 17 - 23 inches of water annually. The sandy soil of the area makes farming difficult, so this area contains one of the largest tracts of unplowed prairie in North America. People primarily use the Sandhills region for cattle grazing. With few lights from buildings and infrastructure across the Sandhills, there is low light pollution, making the area ideal for stargazing.



## Plant Viewing Tips

- 1. Go to where the habitat is** — visit state parks and other public spaces.
- 2. Do your homework** — learn what species grow in the area.
- 3. Think about timing** — check what is blooming in the area this time of year.
- 4. Consult an expert** — join in on a guided plant hike to learn where to find the best blooms.
- 5. Leave no trace** — leave wildlife in nature and nature the way you found it.

### Terms to Know

**Annual Plant** — One year lifecycle

**Biennial Plant** — Two-year lifecycle

**Perennial Plant** — More than two year lifecycle

**Alternating Leaves**

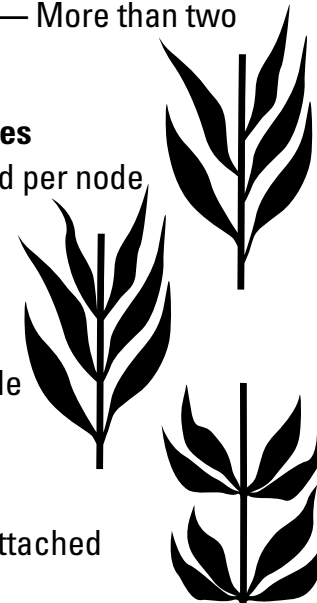
One leaf attached per node

**Opposite Leaves**

A pair of leaves attached per node

**Whorled Leaves**

Several leaves attached per node



# Plants of the Nebraska Sandhills



## Identification Guide

**NEBRASKA**  
— GAME PARKS —

[OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)



### Blowout Penstemon

*Penstemon haydenii*

**Height:** 10 - 30 in.

**Description:** Perennial in multi-stemmed clumps with tubular pink to milky-blue flowers with darker nectar lines.

**Habitat:** Areas of loose, eroded sand

**Blooms:** Late May - mid June

**Viewing:** Sandhills



### Painted Milk-vetch

*Astragalus ceramicus*

**Height:** 2 - 15 in.

**Description:** Perennial with weak stems, reduced leaves, and inconspicuous white flowers followed by cream pods with red mottling.

**Habitat:** Sandy soil

**Blooms:** June - July, pods: late June - July

**Viewing:** Sandhills and Panhandle



### Fourpoint Evening Primrose

*Oenothera rhombipetala*

**Height:** 12 - 36 in.

**Description:** Biennial, alternating leaves on stem, lemon-yellow flowers with four pointed petals.

**Habitat:** Sandy, disturbed soil

**Blooms:** June - August

**Viewing:** Statewide except southeast



### Prairie Rose

*Rose arkansana*

**Height:** 6 - 40 in.

**Description:** Perennial woody shrub, alternating leaves, flowers have five pink petals surrounding yellow center.

**Habitat:** Moist soil

**Blooms:** Late May - August

**Viewing:** Statewide



### Shell-leaf Penstemon

*Penstemon grandiflorus*

**Height:** 24 - 36 in.

**Description:** Perennial with 1 - 3 stems, flowers pink-crimson or occasional blue or white, darker nectar line present.

**Habitat:** Well-drained sandy or disturbed soil

**Blooms:** May - June

**Viewing:** Statewide except Panhandle and SW corner



### Field Snake-cotton

*Froelichia floridana*

**Height:** 18 - 36 in.

**Description:** Annual, mostly leafless, covered with fine or woolly hairs, woolly spikes on end of stems.

**Habitat:** Sandy, disturbed soil

**Blooms:** July - September

**Viewing:** Statewide, most common in Sandhills



### Hairy Puccoon

*Lithospermum carolinense*

**Height:** 12- 24 in.

**Description:** Perennial with alternating leaves, hairy light green stems, yellow flowers.

**Habitat:** Sandy soil

**Blooms:** May - June

**Viewing:** Statewide



### Prickly Poppy

*Argemone polyanthemus*

**Height:** 12 - 24 in.

**Description:** Biennial, spiny alternating leaves, 4 - 6 in. crinkled white flower with yellow center.

**Habitat:** Dry, rocky soil

**Blooms:** May - July

**Viewing:** Statewide



### Silky Prairie Clover

*Dalea villosa*

**Height:** 12 - 18 in.

**Description:** Perennial with alternating silver-green leaves and pink flowers in 4-inch spike atop stem.

**Habitat:** Loose, sandy soil

**Blooms:** Mid June - August

**Viewing:** Statewide except Panhandle and SE corner



### Plains Sunflower

*Helianthus petiolaris*

**Height:** 20 - 60 in.

**Description:** Annual sunflower with yellow disk flowers are about 3 in. across and have red-brown centers, tall hairy stems alternating leaves.

**Habitat:** Dry soil

**Blooms:** Late June - September

**Viewing:** Statewide



### Sand Milkweed

*Asclepias arenaria*

**Height:** Up to 24 in.

**Description:** Perennial with opposite leaves, green-cream flowers in spherical clusters.

**Habitat:** Sandy, well-drained soil

**Blooms:** June- August

**Viewing:** Central and west



### Bigroot Prickly Pear

*Opuntia macrorhiza*

**Height:** < 10 in.

**Description:** Cactus with stems in round jointed pads covered in clusters of spines, yellow flowers with overlapping petals.

**Habitat:** Dry, rocky soil

**Blooms:** May - July

**Viewing:** Statewide, most common east of Panhandle



### Lead Plant

*Amorpha canescens*

**Height:** 12 - 36 in.

**Description:** Perennial shrub with woody stem, alternating leaflets, and stalk of red-purple flowers.

**Habitat:** Well-drained soil

**Blooms:** June - July

**Viewing:** Statewide



### Gilia

*Ipomopsis longiflora*

**Height:** 12 - 24 in.

**Description:** Annual - biennial, alternating leaves, white trumpet flowers, sometimes with a blue tinge.

**Habitat:** Dry, sandy soil

**Blooms:** June - August

**Viewing:** Sandhills and Panhandle



### Wild Begonia

*Rumex venosus*

**Height:** 4 - 12 in.

**Description:** Perennial, often forms colonies, has alternating leaves, inconspicuous green flowers and showy crimson winged fruit.

**Habitat:** Sandy, disturbed soils

**Blooms:** Late May - July

**Viewing:** Statewide except SE, common in Sandhills and Panhandle



### Yucca

*Yucca glauca*

**Height (Leaf):** 16 - 30 in.

**Description:** Perennial with rosette of stiff, sharp leaves. Flowers grow from central stalk that can reach 5 ft. high.

**Habitat:** Dry prairie

**Blooms:** Late May - mid July

**Viewing:** Statewide