

# FGCU Food Forest

## Plant Database

### Fakahatchee Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)

#### Quick Facts

**Origin:** Eastern United States

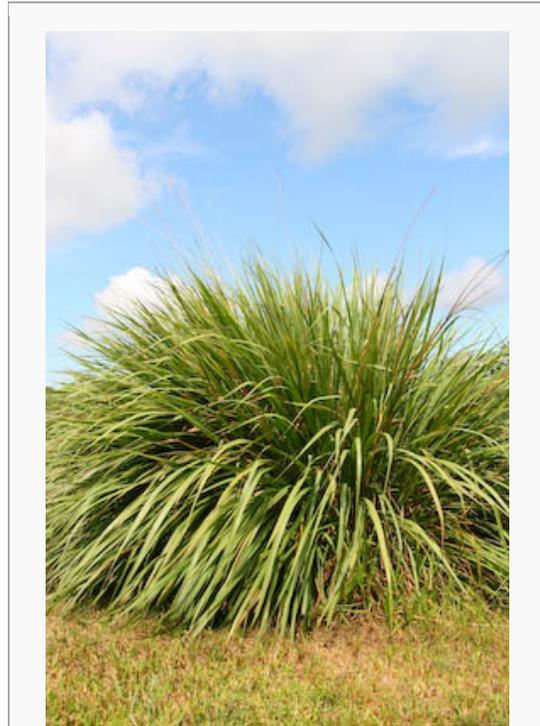
**Description:** Very large grass with stems clump-forming, to 6 ft. tall. The leaf blades large, flat, smooth, to 2 1/2 ft. long, to 1 in. wide with smooth sheaths.

**Uses:** Landscaping and feed crop

**Harvest:** Grows mid-April to mid-September.

**Flower:** Red spikes made up of female and male spikelets.

**Tolerance:** Prefers fertile soils but is tolerant of many types as long as it is moist. Plants survive temperatures as low as -30°C, but require at least 140 frost free days/year for longer-term persistence.



**General Description:** Easy to grow and virtually pest-free, this grass is stunningly beautiful with its rich green foliage erupting from fountain-like clumps that will grow to 5 ft. (1.5 m) in height and 4 ft. (1.2 m) wide. The leaves are erect up to 6 ft. (1.8 m) in length and about 1 in (2.5 cm) wide. Distinctive flowers appear in late spring (in the Deep South) to mid-summer and rise above the leaves on slender stems. It is a distant relative of the corn species (*Zea mays*) and, like corn, the male part of the plant is located in the upper section of the female part.

- **Native Origin:** *Tripsacum dactyloides* is native to the eastern United States from New England to Michigan and Ohio then southward to Florida and westward to Texas. Its native habitats include moist areas around lakes and streams, boggy areas, ditches, etc.
- **General History:** Fakahatchee grass was widely considered a high class feedcrop among the early settlers of the United States. However, it started to disappear because of grain crops and

cattle grazing. Native animals like buffalo and elk grazed in areas where Fakahatchee grass grew before European settlement and then moved to other areas until fresh grass grew to replace the grazed places. This grass requires a moderate amount of carbohydrates stored in the leaf bases for regrowth.

- **Distribution:** This grass has *Tripsacum* relatives throughout the United States and Mexico. The plant was first cultivated in Iowa and the southwestern United States, and the habitat range is still expanding. *Tripsacum dactyloides* is widely spread throughout the United States, from Connecticut to Nebraska and south to Florida and Texas. It is also found as far south as South America, in Paraguay and Brazil. Fakahatchee grass is adapted to numerous habitats like sandy soils, marshes, riverbanks, open spaces in tropical rain forests, and even rocky outcrop.
- **Season of Harvest:** Grows from mid-April to mid-September. Distinctive flowers appear in late spring (in the Deep South) to mid-summer and rise above the leaves on slender stems. Fakahatchee grass is evergreen in sub-tropical areas.
- **Uses:** Used for soil conservation, ornamental decoration, and a feedcrop. This is a great plant to add interest and mass to those problematic wet areas like ditches, drainage ponds and near small creeks and streams. It also attracts butterflies and is excellent ground cover.

Fakahatchee Grass	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Monocots
(unranked):	Commelinids
Order:	Poales
Family:	Poaceae
Genus:	<i>Tripsacum</i>
Species:	<b><i>T. dactyloides</i></b>

### Sources

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripsacum\\_dactyloides#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripsacum_dactyloides#History)
- <http://mobile.floridata.com/Plants/Poaceae/Tripsacum%20dactyloides/519>
- [http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=TRDA3](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=TRDA3)
- <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/458>
- [http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Tripsacum\\_dactyloides.htm](http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/Forages/Media/Html/Tripsacum_dactyloides.htm)