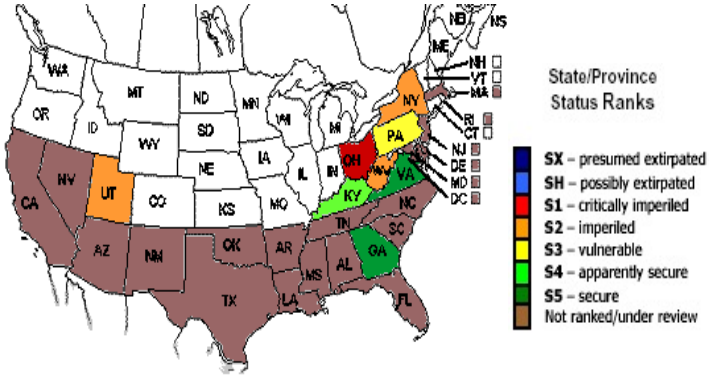
Bushy Bluestem
Andropogon glomeratus

Description
Bushy bluestem is an erect, tufted perennial grass that may grow to 3 feet (1 m) tall. The leaves have narrow, elongate blades approximately 3/8 of an inch (3-6 mm) wide, and tend to turn copper to orange in the fall. The individual flowers are minute and are grouped in small spikelets that are surrounded by fluffy, gray-white bristles. Numerous groupings of the spikelets are aggregated together to form a bushy terminal cluster, which give the plant its name.

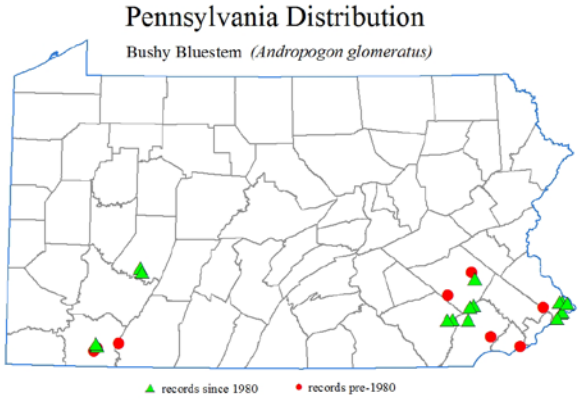
Photo source: John Kunsman, PNHP

Distribution & Habitat
Bushy bluestem has a range across the continent in the southern states, with an extension northeastward into southern New England. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in scattered locations, particularly in the southern counties. The bushy bluestem grows in a variety of damp to wet open places, clearings, and sometimes in human-created disturbed ground.

North American State/Province Conservation Status
Map by NatureServe 2014



Current State Status
The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers bushy bluestem to be a species of special concern, based on the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status of Undetermined and has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Rare by PABS. About 15 populations are currently known from the state.



Conservation Considerations
The populations of bushy bluestem in the state are threatened by human-related habitat loss, natural succession, invasive species, and the indiscriminate spraying of herbicides. Given the preference of the species for open habitats, active management – such as fire, mowing, or invasive species removal – is often required to maintain the proper successional stage at sites where it grows.

NatureServe conservation status ranks
G5 – Globally secure; **S3** – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at http://www.natureserve.org/explorer.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program