

Lopsided indiagrass

(*Sorghastrum secundum*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Lopsided indiagrass is a robust and unique perennial bunchgrass. It occurs naturally in pinelands, sandhills and flatwoods, and typically blooms in late summer through fall. It is the larval host plant for the Delaware skipper, Dusted skipper and Swarthy skipper.

Throughout most of the year, Lopsided indiagrass is rather indistinct. But in late summer, it produces tall, dramatic flower spikes. Each tiny flower is wrapped in bracts that are covered in soft, bronze to brown hairs, and bears a long, twisted, reddish-brown awn and bright yellow anthers. When lit by the sun, the colorful flowerheads flicker and flash. The entire inflorescence occurs



Photo by Katherine Edison

on one side of the rachis, hence the common descriptor “lopsided.” Leaves are dark green with long, tapering blades up to 18 inches long. Leaf sheaths are covered in fine hairs.

The genus name *Sorghastrum* literally translates to “poor imitation of Sorghum.” It is a combination of the genus *Sorghum* and the Latin suffix *-astrum*, meaning “expressing incomplete resemblance.” The species epithet *secundum* is from the Latin *secundus*, meaning “following,” “next” or (loosely) “in a row” and refers to the formation of flowers on one side of the rachis.

Family: Poaceae (also called Gramineae or true grasses)

Native range: Mostly throughout Florida

To see where natural populations of Lopsided Indiagrass have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Soil: Moist to dry, well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 2–3' feet; up to 6' tall when flowering

Propagation: Seed, division

Garden tips: Lopsided Indiagrass is primarily recommended for naturalistic landscapes and habitat restorations. It can also be incorporated into a wildflower garden, but should be used in the background where its height (when flowering) won't obscure other wildflowers. It will self-seed slowly and will need to be cut back annually.

Lopsided Indiagrass seeds are often available from the Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are occasionally available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.