

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.



Photo by Emily Bell

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 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 (Grass family)

Native range: Mostly throughout Florida

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

Lifespan: Perennial

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

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Despite its height, Lopsided indiagrass does not generally obscure other plants. It makes a beautiful addition to naturalistic landscapes, wildflower gardens, or mixed meadows with other bunchgrasses and wildflowers. It also can be planted in small masses. Consider locating the plants where the sun will backlight the flowering stems.

Lopsided indiagrass is often available at nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

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