

Ornamental Grasses for Kentucky Landscapes

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Many ornamental grasses are available for use in residential and commercial landscapes and gardens. This publication will help you select grasses that fit different landscape needs and grasses that are hardy in Kentucky (USDA Zone 6). Grasses are selected for their attractive foliage, distinctive form, and/or showy flowers and seedheads. All but one of the grasses mentioned in this publication are perennial types (see *Glossary*).

Grasses can be used as ground covers, specimen plants, in or near water, perennial borders, rock gardens, or naturalized areas. Annual grasses and many perennial grasses have attractive flowers and seedheads and are suitable for fresh and dried arrangements.

Selecting and Buying

Select a grass that is right for your climate. According to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, 1990 revision, Kentucky is in Zones 6a and b. Also consider the microclimate, such as soil type, pH, wind, drought conditions, etc. Both warm- and cool-season grasses (see *Glossary*) perform well in Kentucky.

The grass must fit into your landscape plan. It must be the right size, shape, and color, and it needs to bloom in the right season.

WARNING: After several years, some large grasses are very difficult to divide or move without axes, chainsaws, and, sometimes, heavy equipment.

Consider the growth habit of the plant. Some are invasive, either from underground rhizomes or from self-seeding. In the descriptions given in the glossary, “rhizomatous” as a descriptor means “Watch out, it spreads.” These types of grasses should be used cautiously. A steep slope where you want quick cover and have plenty of room for it to spread without invading landscaped areas is the place to put “rhizomatous” species.

Grasses can be purchased in containers or bare-root (without soil). If you purchase plants from a mail-order nursery, they will be shipped bare-root. Some plants may not bloom until the second season, so buying a larger plant with an established root system is a good idea if you want landscape value the first year. If you order from a mail-order nursery, plants will be shipped in spring with limited shipping in summer and fall.

Planting

When: The best time to plant grasses is spring, so they will be established by the time hot summer months arrive. Container-grown grasses can be planted during the summer as long as adequate moisture is supplied. Cool-season grasses can be planted in early fall, but plenty of mulch should be used to protect fall plantings from winter kill.

Soil: Most grasses will grow in good or heavy clay soils. Those that have special soil requirements are listed later in this publication.

Spacing: Spacing depends on your budget, aesthetics, and how quickly you need cover. A general rule is to place plants as far apart as their eventual height. Grasses that have a mature height of 3 feet may be placed 3 feet apart, from center to center. If quick cover is desired, and if your budget allows, plant closer.

Planting: Planting grasses involves the same guidelines as any other perennial plant. Keep the following in mind:

- Always try to match the original soil line of the plant.
- Do not plant too high or too low below the crown.
- Newly planted grasses are susceptible to drying out, so water them immediately after planting, and keep them well watered until they are established.

Mulching: Mulching is important to get your grass plant off to a good start. Mulch reduces weeds, conserves soil moisture, reduces soil temperature, and provides winter protection. A 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch is best.

Maintenance

Watering: Except in extreme periods of drought, most established grasses should receive enough rainfall in Kentucky without supplemental water. Drip irrigation, applied directly to the root zone, is best during flowering because overhead irrigation may cause rapid decline of flowers.

Cutting back foliage: This is probably the single most important maintenance task when growing grasses. Physical removal of dead foliage is a substitute for the natural processes of periodic burning and grazing that take place in grassland ecology. Ornamental grasses should be cut back just before or as the new season's growth begins to appear. For most grasses in Kentucky, cut back ornamental grasses in late February or March. This will allow you to enjoy the attractive tan or reddish foliage during winter months.

Most grasses should be cut to a few inches above the ground. Some cool-season grasses such as *Calamagrostis* do not need severe pruning since they are mostly evergreen.

A pair of hand pruners or a string trimmer will work for most plants. However, most species that grow more than 10 feet tall will have large, woody stems that can be cut only with a string trimmer blade attachment, pruning saw, or chainsaw.

Dividing and transplanting: Grasses may need to be divided and transplanted to propagate more plants, renew older clumps that tend to die within the center of the clump, or move plants to a better location. Warm-season grasses should be divided in late winter or early spring. Cool-season grasses may be divided in fall, winter, or early spring.

Dividing and moving large grasses takes a sharp axe and/or saw, a shovel, and a strong back. In some cases, you may have to rent equipment like a backhoe to move these plants. Divide the plant into good-sized divisions with multiple tillers (stems). They can be divided into smaller divisions, but these require more time to reach mature size. Keep newly divided plants moist and shaded until planted in their new location.

Landscape Uses of Ornamental Grasses

The following lists of grasses have been tested and are desirable for Kentucky. They are organized by size, specific cultural requirements (sun, shade, bogs, drought tolerance, etc.), and specific uses (cut flowers, screens, dried flowers, etc.). Grasses may appear in more than one list.

Following the lists are detailed descriptions of culture for individual grass species, including height, cultural requirements, period of bloom, plant form, cultivars, and other pertinent information.

Large Grasses (3 Feet Tall and More)

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass



Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta' – Feather Reed Grass

Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass
Spodiopogon sibiricus—Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Medium Grasses (1 to 3 Feet Tall)

Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis arundinacea 'Karl Foerster'—Foerster's Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass

Small Grasses (Under 1 Foot Tall)

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* 'Variegatum'—Bulbous Oat Grass

Grasses for Full Sun

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* 'Variegatum'—Bulbous Oat Grass
Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass
C. arundinacea 'Karl Foerster'—Foerster's Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass

Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass
Spodiopogon sibiricus—Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Grasses for Shade

Calamagrostis arundinacea var. *brachytricha*—Korean Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Chinese Silver Grass
Molinia caerulea ‘Variegata’—Variegated Moor Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass
Spodiopogon sibiricus—Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Grasses for Bog/Water Gardens

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Calamagrostis arundinacea ‘Karl Foerster’—Foerster’s Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa ‘Bronzeschleier’—Bronze Veil Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass



Pennisetum alopecuroides – Fountain Grass

Grasses for Groups/Massing

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis acutiflora ‘Stricta’—Feather Reed Grass
Calamagrostis arundinacea ‘Karl Foerster’—Foerster’s Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Grasses for Naturalized Areas

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* ‘Variegatum’—Bulbous Oat Grass
Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis arundinacea ‘Karl Foerster’—Foerster’s Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Grasses for Screens

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Calamagrostis arundinacea var. *brachytricha*—Korean Reed Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass
Spodiopogon sibiricus—Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Grasses for Dried Arrangements

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis acutiflora ‘Stricta’—Feather Reed Grass
Calamagrostis arundinacea ‘Karl Foerster’—Foerster’s Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass

Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Grasses for Cut Flowers

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis acutiflora ‘Stricta’—Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Drought-Tolerant Grasses

Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis arundinacea ‘Karl Foerster’—Foerster’s
 Feather Reed Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass



Miscanthus sinensis ‘Silberpfeil’ – Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass
Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Grasses for Specimen Plants/Borders

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* ‘Variegatum’—
 Bulbous Oat Grass
Arundo donax—Giant Reed
Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma
Calamagrostis acutiflora ‘Stricta’—Feather Reed Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa ‘Bronzeschleier’—Bronze Veil
 Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass
Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass
Spartina pectinata ‘Aureo-marginata’—Variegated Prairie
 Cord Grass
Spodiopogon sibiricus—Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Grasses for Rock Gardens

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* ‘Variegatum’—
 Bulbous Oat Grass
Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass
Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass
Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass
Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass
Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass
Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Grasses for House Plants

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* ‘Variegatum’—
 Bulbous Oat Grass
Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass
Phalaris arundinacea and cultivars—Ribbon Grass

Grasses for Ground Covers

Ground cover is defined as a massed planting of plants with uniform growth that covers the ground with enough density to compete well with weedy plants. Ground covers are valuable in special sites where turf grass will not thrive, where regular turf maintenance (mowing) is a problem, or where a diversity of color and texture is desirable. See

H0-78, *Ground Covers for Kentucky Landscapes*, for more information on ground covers.

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* 'Variegatum'—
Bulbous Oat Grass

Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass

Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass

Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass

Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass

Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass

Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Cold-Hardy Grasses (Zone 4: -20°F to -30°F)

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* 'Variegatum'—
Bulbous Oat Grass

Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass

Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass

Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass

Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass

Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass

Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass

Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass



Phalaris arundinacea – Ribbon Grass

Grasses with Fall Color

Arundo donax—Giant Reed

Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass

Calamagrostis arundinacea 'Karl Foerster'—Foerster's
Feather Reed Grass

Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass

Erianthus ravennae—Plume Grass, Ravennae Grass

Hakonechloa macra—Hakone Grass

Helictotrichon sempervirens—Blue Oat Grass

Miscanthus sinensis—Maiden Grass, Eulalia Grass

Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass

Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass

Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass

Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Grasses with Specific Soil Tolerances

Acidic Soil

Arrhenatherum elatius var. *bulbosum* 'Variegatum'—
Bulbous Oat Grass

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass

Deschampsia caespitosa—Tufted Hair Grass

Molinia caerulea—Purple Moor Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Phalaris arundinacea and cultivars—Ribbon Grass

Alkaline Soil

Arundo donax—Giant Reed

Bouteloua curtipendula—Sideoats Gramma

Koeleria glauca—Blue Hair Grass

Tolerant of Clay Soils

Arundo donax—Giant Reed

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Stricta'—Feather Reed Grass

Calamagrostis arundinacea 'Karl Foerster'—Foerster's
Feather Reed Grass

Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides—Fountain Grass

Pennisetum setaceum—Crimson Fountain Grass

Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Invasive Grasses

Arundo donax—Giant Reed

Calamagrostis arundinacea 'Karl Foerster'—Foerster's
Feather Reed Grass

Miscanthus giganteus—Giant Japanese Silver Grass

Panicum virgatum—Switch Grass

Phalaris arundinacea—Ribbon Grass

Spartina pectinata—Prairie Cord Grass

Spartina pectinata 'Aureo-marginata'—Golden-Edged
Prairie Cord Grass

Culture and Characteristics of Perennial Grasses

Arrhenatherum elatius* var. *bulbosum
'Variegatum' Bulbous Oat Grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 6-12"

Hardiness: Zones 4-9.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Loosely branched, panicle-bearing, small greenish-white flowers. June-July.

Foliage: White-striped.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Clumping, low-growing, open to spreading.

Fall color: Retains variegation into autumn.

Uses: Specimens; rock gardens; perennial borders; accent plants.

Culture: Grows best in moist, well-drained, acid soil. In hot climates, plant in partial shade. Will not be vigorous in wet, heavy clay soils.

Comments: Susceptible to rust. Cut back plants and fertilize if foliage becomes unsightly. May brown out in hot, dry summers. It is a weak competitor to grassy weeds like crabgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, bermudagrass, etc.

***Arundo donax* Giant Reed**

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 7'-20'.

Hardiness: Zones 6-10.

Propagation: Division, perhaps seed.

Flowers: White, light brown, 12-14" long; August-October.

Foliage: Light green to blue green; corn-like.

Texture: Very coarse.

Plant form: Upright-open to upright-arching, rhizomatous.

Fall color: Beige, light tan.

Winter habit: Upright, buff-colored.

Uses: Cut flowers, fresh or dried; specimen or accent plant; perennial border; water garden; screen.

Culture: Full sun; tolerates any soil type; can grow in water; plant in spring.

Cultivars: 'Variegata'—variegated.

'Versicolor'—variegated; 6-10' tall; not as winter-hardy as straight species; good for wetland areas.

***Bouteloua curtipendula* Sideoats Gramma**

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 2-3'.

Hardiness: Zones 3-10.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Purple-tinted, inflorescence 5-15" with spikes arranged lineally along one side of stem; June-July.

Foliage: Gray-green.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Upright-narrow to upright-arching, clump.

Fall color: Straw-colored.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Specimen; groups; massing; naturalized areas; cut flowers (fresh or dried).

Culture: Full sun; moderately alkaline soils; drought-tolerant.



Arundo donax Giant Reed 'Variegata' – Giant Reed (young)

***Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Stricta' Feather reed grass**

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 3-6'.

Hardiness: Zones 4-9.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Pinkish turning to tan; flower plumes rise to 5'; June-July.

Foliage: Green.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Upright-narrow.

Fall color: Orange-yellow.

Winter habit: Upright, buff-colored.

Uses: Specimen; massing; dried flowers; the tightly clumped seed stalks will remain erect from June until removed the next spring.

Culture: Tolerates any type soil; full sun or shade.

Other Cultivars: 'Overdam'—variegated.

***Calamagrostis arundinacea* 'Karl Foerster'—**

Foerster's feather reed grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 2'-3'.

Hardiness: Zones 5-9.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Rose-purple, inflorescence 4-8", late summer-early fall.

Foliage: Medium green.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Upright-narrow to upright-open.

Fall color: Yellow.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Small groups; naturalized areas in bogs, lakes, ponds, water gardens; screens, windbreaks

Culture: Needs full-day sun; tolerates heavy soils; will take heat if moisture is plentiful.

Comments: In mild climates Foerster's feather reed grass is similar to feather reed grass. In colder climates, Foerster's has a more compact form. Foerster's feather reed grass is often confused with *C. acutiflora* 'Stricta'.

Deschampsia caespitosa Tufted hair grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 20"-36"

Hardiness: Zones 4-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: White, light green; inflorescence 10-20"; April-May.

Foliage: Dark to medium green.

Texture: Fine to medium.

Plant form: Upright-open, densely tufted, mound.

Fall color: Light brown.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Cut flowers, fresh or dried; perennial border; specimen; rock or water gardens; naturalized areas.

Culture: Full sun, partial to full shade; adequate moisture; tolerates heavy clay soils.

Cultivars: 'Bronzeschleier'—30-36" tall with bronze-yellow inflorescence.

'Goldschleier'—2-3' tall with bright yellow inflorescence.

Comments: May brown out in hot summers; likes moisture.

Erianthus ravennae Plume grass, Ravennae grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 7-15'

Hardiness: Zones 5-10.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Silver to gray; inflorescence 1-2'; August-October.

Foliage: Light green; dense.

Texture: Medium to coarse.

Plant form: Upright-open; clump-type.

Fall color: Brown, tinged with orange or purple.

Winter habit: Upright and buff-colored.

Uses: Specimen in rock and water gardens; perennial borders; screen; fresh and dried cut flowers.

Culture: Full-sun; well-drained soil.

Hakonechloa macra Hakone Grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 18"-2'.

Hardiness: Zones 4-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Light green; inflorescence 6-10"; August-October.

Foliage: Bright or pale greenish-yellow, bamboo-like.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Upright-open, mound-forming; rhizomatous.

Fall color: Buff.

Uses: Borders; groups; naturalized areas; rock or water gardens; shade-tolerant; grown for foliage.

Culture: Light shade; fertile, moist, well-drained soil.

Comments: May brown out in hot summers.

Helictotrichon sempervirens Blue Oat Grass, Blue Ornamental Oats

Perennial, cool-season, evergreen/semi-evergreen

Height: 1-3'.

Hardiness: Zones 4-8.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Whitish, light beige; inflorescence 4-6"; June-July.

Foliage: Blue/gray.

Texture: Fine to medium.

Plant form: Upright-open; mound-forming, clump.

Fall color: Blue-green.

Winter habit: Mounded.

Uses: Meadow; specimen, accent; ground cover; rock garden; grown for bluish-green foliage.

Culture: Fertile, moist soil in full sun or light shade.

Koeleria glauca Blue Hair Grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 12"

Hardiness: Zones 3-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Spring-flowering.

Foliage: Blue-gray.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Upright-open, tufted clump.

Uses: Meadow; specimen/accent; ground cover; rock garden.

Culture: Full sun; alkaline soil; good drainage; does not tolerate heavy, wet soil or shady sites.

Comments: Excellent grass for small yards; grows poorly in hot climates.

Miscanthus giganteus (Also known as

***M. floridulus*) Giant Chinese Silver Grass**

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 8-15'

Hardiness: Zone 4-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: White; inflorescence to 20"; August-October.

Foliage: Pale green.

Texture: Coarse.

Plant form: Upright clumps with arching foliage.

Fall color: Reddish-purple stain to green foliage.

Winter habit: Vertical.

Uses: Screen/hedge; specimen/accent; gives tropical effect, even in cold climates.

Culture: Sun, half-shade; fertile soil.

Comments: Largest *Miscanthus* species; grown for fall and winter effects; aggressive; lower leaves die and become unattractive during late summer.

Miscanthus sinensis Eulalia Grass,

Japanese Silver Grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 5-13'

Hardiness: Zones 5-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: White or reddish; inflorescence 10-12"; August-October.

Foliage: Medium green.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Dense upright clumps of arching foliage.

Fall color: Beige.

Winter habit: Upright and buff-colored, or upright.

Uses: Specimen, accent; screens; windbreaks; fresh and dried cut flowers.

Culture: Full sun; adaptable to wide range of soil types, but requires ample moisture and fertility. Clumps need staking in shade or if given too much nitrogen.

Cultivars:

'Autumn Light'—6-9'; shorter plant with thinner leaves than 'Goliath'. The two cultivars are attractive planted together.

'Cabaret'—5-7'; excellent cultivar.

'Goliath'—8-9'; very large, upright.

'Gracillimus'—(Maiden Grass) 4-7', fine-textured, flowers September until frost.

'Graziella'—5-6'; very attractive cultivar.

'Grosse Fontaine'—6-7'; very attractive cultivar.

'Kascade'—flowers held above foliage; plumes weep down in cascading fashion.

'Klein Fontaine'—very silver, early flowering.

'Morning Light'—4', thin, variegated foliage. Good for small yard.

'November Sunset'—6-8'; very attractive.

'Purpurascens'—3-5'; smaller stature; leaves have reddish fall/winter color; blooms early, starting in August.

'Sarabande'—4-6'; good for small yards.

'Silberfeder'—6-9'; flowers two weeks earlier than 'Gracillimus'; foliage bluish-green; silver feathery plumes.

'Silberpfeil'—5-7'; good substitute for 'Variegatus'.

'Strictus'—4-8'; smaller version of 'Zebrinus' and more winter-hardy. Good substitute for 'Zebrinus'.

'Variegatus'—5-8'; coarse-textured with green and yellow longitudinal stripes on leaves. Flowers September until frost. Foliage falls open.

'Yaku Jima'—3-4'; smaller in stature than other cultivars.

'Zebrinus'—(Zebra Grass) 5-9'; variegated foliage, coarse-textured with horizontal yellow stripes. Flowers September until frost. Can become floppy with age.

Molinia caerulea Purple Moor Grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 20-36"

Hardiness: Zones 4-8.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Usually light to dark purple; inflorescence 4-8"; July to September.

Foliage: Medium green.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Upright to arching.

Fall color: Tan, tawny.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Ground cover; specimen; groups; houseplant.

Culture: Fertile acid to neutral soil in sunny, moist, or wet areas. Intolerant of alkaline soils.

Cultivars:

'Variegata'—1-2'; variegated form, adapted to shady sites in Zones 5-8.

Panicum virgatum Switch Grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 3-7'

Hardiness: Zones 5-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Slightly reddish; inflorescence 6-12"; July-September.

Foliage: Medium green, bronze at maturity.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Upright-open, clumping.

Fall color: Golden-yellow or bronze fading to beige.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Background plantings; specimen; fresh and dried cut flowers; massed plantings along canals and highways.

Culture: Adapted to wide range of soil conditions. Grows best in full sun or light shade in moist, wet, or dry sites. Can withstand occasional flooding. Tall plants may require staking.

Cultivars:

'Rehbraun'—3-4'; red switch grass; excellent cultivar.
 'Rotsrahlbusch'—3-4'; red fall color.
 'Strictum'—5-6'; bluish-green foliage; blooms early.

Pennisetum alopecuroides Fountain Grass

Perennial, warm-season

Height: 2-4'.

Hardiness: Zones 6-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Brown or bronze, becoming bright reddish; inflorescence 4-10"; June-October.

Foliage: Medium to dark green, turning yellowish.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Upright-open, mound-forming.

Fall color: Yellow or golden fading to straw-colored.

Uses: An excellent grass for specimen; groups; screen; fresh and dried cut flowers.

Culture: Fertile, moist, well-drained soil in full sun or light shade. Prefers slightly acid to neutral soils.

Cultivars:

'Hameln'—dwarf fountain grass—18-24"; pink flowers.
 'Moudry'—2-3'; black flowers, reddish-tinted foliage.
 'Viridescens'—2'; black flowers, greenish-yellow foliage.

Phalaris arundinacea 'Picta' Ribbon Grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 2-3'.

Hardiness: Zones 4-8.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Greenish, sometimes purplish; inflorescence 3-6"; June-July.

Foliage: Variegated, green and white.

Texture: Coarse.

Plant form: Upright-narrow; tufted.

Fall color: Beige.

Winter habit: Dies back.

Uses: Ground cover; specimen; bedding plants; houseplants.

Culture: Salt-tolerant; grows best in light shade and moist, fertile soil; aggressive.

Spartina pectinata Prairie Cord Grass

Perennial

Height: 3-6'.

Hardiness: Zones 5-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Light yellow-beige; inflorescence is 2-3" spikes, 10-20 per stem; August-October.

Foliage: Medium green.

Texture: Medium.

Plant form: Upright-open, rhizomatous.

Fall color: Yellow.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Ground cover in marshes, seashore, steep slopes, highway banks; groups/massing; screen.

Culture: Plants do best in full sun or light shade in wet, heavy soil.

Cultivars:

'Aureo-marginata'—4-6'; excellent variegated cord grass, upright-open tufted form.

Spodiopogon sibiricus Silver Spike Grass, Frost Grass, Graybeard Grass

Perennial, cool-season

Height: 3-6'.

Hardiness: Zone 4-9.

Propagation: Division, seed.

Flowers: Purple; July-October.

Foliage: Medium green.

Texture: Coarse.

Plant form: Clump, bamboo-like.

Fall color: Purple, wine tints.

Winter habit: Upright.

Uses: Excellent plant for specimen/accent; screen; cut flowers.

Culture: Sun, shade or partial shade.

Annual Grass***Pennisetum setaceum*** Crimson Fountain Grass

Annual

Height: 2-4'.

Hardiness: Zones 5-8, annual; Zones 8-9, perennial.

Propagation: Division.

Flowers: Dark purple, red; inflorescence 6-12"; August-October.

Foliage: Green, purple to dark red in variants.

Texture: Fine.

Plant form: Mound to upright-arching.

Fall color: Beige.

Winter habit: Dies back to ground.

Uses: Annual or perennial border; specimen/accent; water garden.

Culture: Full sun or partial shade.

Cultivars:

'Rubrum'—2-3'; rose foliage and flowers.
 'Burgundy Giant'—purplish foliage; sterile plants; propagate by division; very coarse texture.

Glossary

Accent plant—used in border plantings, on berms, and on the lawn in various combinations with other ornamentals to augment, emphasize, and complement them. They are not necessarily the main attraction as are specimen plants. Example: *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Yaku Jima’.

Annual—a plant that completes its life cycle from seed to flowering in one growing season. Example: *Pennisetum setaceum*.

Cool-season grass—a grass whose optimal growing conditions are in cool weather. Some may become dormant in climates with long, hot summers. Example: *Calamagrostis acutiflora* ‘Stricta’.

Inflorescence—the total flowering structure and arrangement of individual flowers on the main stem.

Perennial—a plant that lives for three or more growing seasons. Example: *Arundo donax*.

Rhizomatous—having rhizomes, underground stems resembling roots, usually growing horizontally and rooting at the nodes. Example: *Phalaris arundinacea*.

Specimen plant—a single plant or plant clump representative of the species or cultivar having some attractive, unique, and desirable attribute. Example: *Miscanthus sinensis* var. *gracillimus*.

Spike—a narrow and usually longer-than-wide inflorescence, the flowers borne along one main stem.

Warm-season grass—a grass that stays dormant longer and begins growth later in spring than a cool-season grass. Often, they are at their peak during the dog days of summer and bloom in late summer or fall. Example: *Pennisetum alopecuroides*.

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