

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Grasses always have been a primary component of prairies. However, Midwest gardeners are learning to appreciate their aesthetic qualities and seasonal interest in landscapes as ornamentals. Many ornamental grasses tolerate drought, low fertility, fluctuating winter temperatures and a variety of soil conditions and are resistant to many pests and diseases.

Ornamental grasses vary in size, form, color and texture. Mature plants range in height from 6 inches to over 10 feet, from low mounds to upright to arching. Foliage and inflorescence (flower) colors include green, gold, tan, brown, orange, red, burgundy, silver, white, blue and variegated. Many grasses also exhibit attractive fall colors.

Ornamental grasses can be used as screens, backdrops, specimens, or for mass planting. They can be used in either formal or naturalized landscapes. Because the leaves are easily blown around in the wind, rustling sounds and gentle motions are created. They also provide various degrees of texture – an often overlooked feature of a landscape. In addition, grasses provide valuable wildlife cover and can serve as a food source.

Grasses, like other plants, prefer well drained soil. Dig a slightly larger hole and add a generous amount of compost. Don't forget to use Myke and Root Stimulator. Be sure to put a 2-3 inch layer of mulch around each plant. Give your plants a good, deep drink about once a week, if you don't get an inch of rain. Once established, most grasses can survive without water for long periods of time.

Grasses benefit from division every 3-4 years to reduce crowding or to rejuvenate plants suffering from die-out in the center. Divisions should be done in early spring before new growth begins or fall after the growing season. Cut grasses back late fall or early spring down to the ground.

See our list of ornamental grass on the back of this sheet!



Full Sun to Part Shade:				
Botanical Name	Common Name	Variety Name	Height	Remarks
Arundo	Giant Reed	Versicolor	8-10'	Good for screening
Calamagrostis	Feather Reed	Karl Foerster	5-6'	One of the best
		Avalanche	4'	White center stripe
Chasmanthium	Northern Sea Oats		3'	Native
Festuca	Blue Fescue	Elijah Blue	12"	Good for borders
Helictotrichon	Oatgrass	Sapphire	12"	Intense blue
Miscanthus	Maiden Grass	Gracillimus	5-7'	Narrow-leaf upright
		Morning Light	5-7'	Silver variegation
		Adiago	3-4'	Dwarf
	Porcupine Grass	Strictus	6-8'	Horizontal variegated
	Flame Grass		4-5'	Red fall color
	Var. Jap. Silver	Variegatus	5-6'	Variegated
	Jap. Silver Grass	Yaku Jima	3-4'	Dwarf
Ophiopogon	Mondo Grass	Silver Dragon	12"	White variegated
	Black Mondo	Niger	6-5"	Dark purple leaf
Panicum		Heavy Metal	3-4'	Yellow in fall
		North Wind	4-5'	Greenish-blue
		Shenandoah	4-5'	Burgundy in fall
Pennisetum		Hamelin	2-3'	Dwarf
		Little Bunny	12"	Miniature
Saccharum	Hardy Pampas	Ravennae	8-10'	
Schizachyrium	Little Bluestem	Prairie Blues	3'	
		The Blues	3'	True blue

Part Sun to Shade:				
Botanical Name	Common Name	Variety Name	Height	Remarks
Carex	Leather-leaf Sedge	Buchananii	2'	Everbrown cinnamon
Hakonechloa	All Golde Japanese Forest Grass	All Gold	12-18"	
	Golden Japanese Forest Grass	Aureola	18"	
Liriope	Lilyturf	Big Blue	18"	
		Variegata	12"	