

# Garden Club Newsletter



## Ornamental Grasses

Grasses are a great addition to your landscape. Grasses are adaptable and can grow in poorer soils better than many other garden plants. They require little effort to maintain. Ornamental grasses come in many heights, colors, textures and have varying water requirements. Their seed heads and foliage add fall and winter interest. Dried grasses have many decorative uses indoors and out. Grasses can be used as groundcovers, specimen plants, for erosion control, and as vertical design elements. Probably the most recognized and popular ornamental grass used in this area is **Feather Reed Grass**. The

**Did You Know...** You can tell the temperature outside by listening to a **cricket!** Count the number of chirps in 15 seconds, then add 37. The sum will be the approximation of temperature in degrees Fahrenheit

variety that people use the most is 'Karl Foerster'. The blades of this grass are green, and it is a cool season grass. Cool meaning that it turns green when the temperatures are still quite cool. Other varieties in the same family are: 'El Dorado' (green blades with yellow), Avalanche (more green on

the blade than white), and Overdam (more white on the blade than green). The plumes of this grass are easily recognized as they remind most people of wheat. This grass has great winter interest as it holds its plume until spring.

My favorite family of grass is switch grass. **Red switch** is one grass that I put in nearly every landscape plan. The foliage of this grass turns a burgundy red color starting in August. The plume reminds me of baby's breath. It is light and airy, yet it is splashed with burgundy also. The foliage holds its color long into the winter months. 'Heavy metal' is another variety that has lavender-blue foliage and a plume that is also burgundy. The silvery foliage looks great with 'Karl Foerster' or against a dark hued shrub like a viburnum.

The grasses I spoke of before are in the height range of four feet.

Smaller ornamental grasses also have their place in the landscape—more as an accent plant than one of vertical design. **Dwarf fountain grass** has a nice compact habit, dark green foliage, and a bottle brush bloom.

**Blue Fescue** has silver-blue foliage and a golden plume that is small.

The height of blue fescue, including the plume is about eighteen

inches. **Boulder blue fescue** is also a nice short grass. It is slightly taller than blue fescue, and has a larger plume. One of the most interesting blue grasses is **Blue oat grass**—or Blue Avena. It has a nice round habit, thicker blades and a beautiful plume that is slightly fuller than the fescues. All of these make great border plantings, or mix in well with perennials.

**Hardy Pampas** is also very popular. It is used as a design element as well as a property barrier, or to hide unsightly areas around your home. It does well in dry conditions, but will grow even larger when it receives lots of water. It can grow to heights of 14' and can grow six feet across. It has beautiful, full plumes that look great in the winter time. They are often used in floral design as a dried flower.

**Zebra grass** is a nice variegated grass that comes in two heights. There is one that grows approximately six feet tall, and the dwarf variety grows about 3-4 feet tall. There are also several varieties of **Miscanthus** to choose from as well as **Big and Little Bluestem**. The varieties are endless. You can choose your grass based on height, color of blade, plume, or

fall color. Some are cool season grasses, and others will not turn green until the first of June. All are great landscape plants as they look great in spring, plume in the summer, and have winter interest to make your yard look super—even in Nebraska.

**GARDEN CLUB SPECIALS - August**  
**30% off**  
 (garden club members only)  
**Fall garden flag- limit 1**  
**Fall candle-limit 1**  
**Bulk mulch-limit 1 yard**

**Garden Club Meeting — Saturday, August 21st, 10am**  
**Guest speaker, Ty Acton, will be discussing trees and shrubs for our area**  
 Please call and let us know if you are attending. **Thanks**