



## GIANT ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

There are no gerardii ) was the primary grass specimen or an impressive focal point of an ornamental grass collection. z e r o - in the tallgrass prairies that once covered this area. It reaches 6 ' maintenance tall with fine-textured, silvery blue extra care in its inaugural year foliage that turns coppery-red in and then seasonal deadheading the fall. The distinctive, three- and cutting back. But if you are part, purplish flower spikes tolerates drier conditions. If you searching for plants that love appearing in late summer are want to enjoy its structure in the sunshine and make very few responsible for another of its winter garden, plant it in an area demands on a gardener, look no common names – turkey foot protected from strong winds. further than ornamental grasses. grass. Give plume grass an extra blanket of mulch for the winter.

After they are established in the Big bluestem prefers moist garden, ornamental grasses ask conditions, but adapts well to for nothing more than a spring drier soils. A mass of big haircut and your admiration. In bluestem is stunning, but one return, they emerge as fresh plant can be a dramatic accent in green shoots in spring; provide a large sun-soaked perennial attractive foliage throughout the border. season; and bloom in feathery plumes, airy panicles, or fluffy **Plume Grass** foxtails. Many contribute fall And the winner of the drama color, and some persevere queen of ornamental grasses through snowstorms to provide goes to....plume grass! Plume structure in the winter garden. grass (Erianthus ravennae ) is

While I am fond of all ornamental grass. Its gray-green foliage grasses, the varieties I most grows a respectable 4 to 5' tall, covet are the colossal cultivars – but the silvery-white flower the ones where either the foliage plumes rise another 8 to 10 ' or the flowers are at least as tall above the foliage in September. as I am. I put them to use in my The foliage turns shades of landscape as specimen plants in orange, beige, and purple in the long, mixed perennial borders; in fall, and the flowers become groupings with other grasses; feathery, cream-colored panicles. and to screen unwanted views. Utilize this spectacular grass to

### Big Bluestem

Big bluestem (Andropogon

z e r o - in the tallgrass prairies that once covered this area. It reaches 6 ' maintenance tall with fine-textured, silvery blue foliage that turns coppery-red in the fall. The distinctive, three- part, purplish flower spikes tolerates drier conditions. If you want to enjoy its structure in the winter garden, plant it in an area protected from strong winds. Give plume grass an extra blanket of mulch for the winter.

Big bluestem prefers moist conditions, but adapts well to drier soils. A mass of big bluestem is stunning, but one plant can be a dramatic accent in a large sun-soaked perennial border.

### Plume Grass

And the winner of the drama queen of ornamental grasses goes to....plume grass! Plume

grass (Erianthus ravennae ) is our Zone 5 alternative to Pampas grass. Its gray-green foliage grows a respectable 4 to 5' tall, but the silvery-white flower plumes rise another 8 to 10 ' above the foliage in September. The foliage turns shades of orange, beige, and purple in the fall, and the flowers become feathery, cream-colored panicles.

Utilize this spectacular grass to hide or draw attention away from undesirable views. It can also be a magnificent landscape

specimen or an impressive focal point of an ornamental grass collection.

Plume grass is happiest when planted in moist, fertile soil but tolerates drier conditions. If you want to enjoy its structure in the winter garden, plant it in an area protected from strong winds. Give plume grass an extra blanket of mulch for the winter.

### Maiden Grass

One of the most popular ornamental grasses, Maiden grass (Miscanthus sinensis ' Gracillimus ' ), has upright, arching, fine-textured foliage. Coppery-colored flowers appear in September on stems a foot or more above the 5 to 6 ' foliage. They mature to silver for the winter.



The sturdy, upright form of maiden grass suits a formal garden design, but it can also be

the mediator of less-than foliage. Flowers mature to fluffy growing! Reddish tassel-like decorous perennials. It is equally plumes after frost. flowers appear another 1 to 2 ' attractive when planted in above the foliage in October and informal groups of three or five or The striking variegation of then quickly turn to fluffy plumes like sentries on either side of an porcupine grass makes it an ideal – silver at first, then fading to entrance. specimen plant. When it is tan.

backlit by early morning or late afternoon sun, the foliage If your neighbor keeps his boat or maiden grass suits a formal sparkles. Position it behind other summer recreational garden design, but it can also be yellow-flowering perennials like equipment alongside your the mediator of less-than black-eyed Susans or goldenrod property line, plant Giant Chinese decorous perennials. It is equally for an arresting display. silver grass and peace is attractive when planted in restored. This is THE grass to informal groups of three or five or Porcupine grass enjoys moist, use for hedging or to screen like sentries on either side of an fertile soil and will even grow undesirable views. entrance. happily in shallow standing water.

Perfectly placed at a pond 's edge, the beauty of porcupine grass is doubled as it is reflected in the water. Its strong stems can withstand all but the heaviest snows.

**Giant Chinese Silver Grass**

**Porcupine Grass**

Porcupine Grass (Miscanthus sinensis 'Strictus') has the unusual variegation – golden yellow bands cross the leaf blades horizontally. Its foliage grows stiffly upright to 5 ' tall and coppery-colored flowers appear in September 1 to 2 ' above the

Giant Chinese Silver Grass ( Miscanthus floridulus ) is the Goliath of ornamental grasses. The largest member of the Miscanthus family, it has robust canes up to 2 " thick with medium green bamboo-like leaves that skyrocket to 10' tall. If I had time to sit on my garden bench, I am sure I would see it



Here is Miscanthus floridulus in October - a 12 ' wall of beautiful fall color!