

# Ornamental Grasses

Ornamental Grasses, one of the most exciting plant groups, are finally receiving well-deserved attention by the home gardener. They are stylish plants to use in the landscape and perennial garden. Planted singly or in mass they are truly eye catchers. Some are low growing and can be used as ground covers, others are medium height (2-3') and work well with other types of plants. Some grasses grow stately and tall at 6, 8 and even 12' high. These rustle and sway in the wind creating a soft, soothing effect. In winter their graceful shapes stand out against the cold, stark surroundings of the otherwise barren landscape. Their interesting flowers can add appeal through the next spring or be picked, dried and used in dried flower arrangements. In the past, for some reason, grasses have been virtually ignored as suitable ornamentals in America. Europeans have been enjoying these wonderful and versatile ornamentals for years while American gardeners have just started appreciating them on a large scale within the last decade.

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## Andropogon

**ZONE:** 3



*Big Bluestem*

### **'Indian Warrior'**

Forms a tall, strictly upright clump of green foliage that begins to take on dusky purple tones as early as midsummer. The foliage transitions from green to a deep smoky purple with red highlights, becoming enrobed in a shroud of purple.

**HEIGHT:** 5-6'

**BLOOM TIME:** Late Summer

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## Calamagrostis brachytricha

**ZONE:** 4



*Feather Reed Grass*

A stately grass with large feathery seed plumes. Of all the reed grasses this variety is most tolerant of partial shade, although it will relax some to cascade gently. Plumes are very showy, emerging pink tinged, maturing to tan.

**HEIGHT:** 36-48"

**BLOOM TIME:** Mid-Summer-F

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## Calamagrostis x acutiflora

**ZONE:** 3



*Feather Reed Grass*

### **'Karl Foerester'**

This reed grass is a vertical masterpiece! The seeds are sterile, which means the plant won't self-seed. Even though Calamagrostis can grow in fresh-water bogs, it also does well in drier areas. Sways gracefully in the lightest breeze.

**HEIGHT:** 4'

**BLOOM TIME:** June-Novembe

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**Carex elata**

ZONE: 5

*Golden Sedge*

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**'Bowles Golden'**

Has shimmering yellow leaves with dark green margins. Easily grown in medium to wet soil. This species thrives in shallow water (2-3"). Can also be grown in average garden soil, albeit less vigorously, but soil must not be allowed to dry out.

HEIGHT: 18-30"

BLOOM TIME: May-June

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**Carex morrowii**

ZONE: 5

*Variegated Japanese Sedge*

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**'Ice Dance'**

Sedges are grass-like plants, mostly preferring sites with moist, rich soil. This Japanese selection forms a low, tufted mound of dark green grassy leaves, each edged in bright white. Makes a great groundcover or edging plant!

HEIGHT: 8-12"

BLOOM TIME:

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**Carex siderosticha**

ZONE: 5

*Broad-leaved Sedge*

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**'Banana Boat'**

This showy broad-leaved, deciduous sedge lights up the shade garden with its wide, bright lemon to banana yellow and green striped leaves. Creeps slowly to form a dense mass of bold foliage. Insignificant flowers.

HEIGHT: 6-12"

BLOOM TIME:

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**Chasmanthium latifolium**

ZONE: 4

*Northern Sea Oats*

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A very ornamental grass that is easily identifiable from its drooping inflorescences and compressed spikelets. The pale green spikelets turn golden-brown by fall.

HEIGHT: 2-3'

BLOOM TIME: Aug - Sept

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**Erianthus ravennae**

ZONE: 4

*Pampas Grass*

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**ZONE:** 4



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*Pampas Grass*

Cold hardy, and makes an excellent specimen plant all year. Airy, white plumes form in mid-summer over green foliage. Leaves turn to bronze then red in fall. Plant can reach up to 10 feet tall.

**HEIGHT:** 5-10'

**BLOOM TIME:** Sept - Oct

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**Fargisia**

**ZONE:** 5



*Umbrella Bamboo*

**'Murielae'**

A soft, cascading canopy of lustrous foliage. The new shoots are light blue with tan culm sheaths, aging to a yellowish-green. It looks best when planted in an area that gets afternoon shade or dappled sunlight throughout the day.

**HEIGHT:** 10-14'

**BLOOM TIME:**

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**Festuca glauca**

**ZONE:** 4



*Blue Fescue*

**'Boulder Blue'**

Intensely blue and slightly more compact with a tighter habit than other Fescues. Blooms heavily with upright flower stalks producing tan seed plumes that rise just above the tufts.

**HEIGHT:** 6-12"

**BLOOM TIME:** July

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**Hakonechloa macra**

**ZONE:** 5



*Japanese Forest Grass*

**'All Gold'**

Brighten the shade naturally with this splendid Golden Hakone Grass, an upright, vigorous cultivar that grows slowly but surely into a large, magnificent clump. Exquisite foliage color and its elegant habit.

**HEIGHT:** 9-14"

**BLOOM TIME:**

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**Leymus arenarius**

**ZONE:** 4



*Blue Lyme Grass*

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*Blue Lyme Grass*

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**'Blue Dune'**

Grown for its display of exceptionally beautiful steel-blue foliage, this is a spreading grass that needs to be used carefully. Foliage is terrific for arrangements! Clumps are easily divided and even small root pieces will grow. Very drought tolerant.

**HEIGHT:** 3-4'

**BLOOM TIME:**

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**Miscanthus japonicus**

ZONE: 4

*Giant Silver Grass*

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**'Giganteus'**

This is a grass of monstrous proportions, forming very tall clumps of green leaves, their tips arching gracefully in layers. Useful as a living screen or hedge, bearing soft-pink plumes in the fall. Well behaved and not invasive.

**HEIGHT:** 8 - 10'

**BLOOM TIME:** Oct

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**Miscanthus sinensis**

ZONE: 5

*Maiden Grass*

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**'Arabesque'**

Narrow arching blades of dark green with a central white ribbon on a strong upright silhouette. Copper-tinged white plumes rise on purple stems in late summer to dance above the graceful foliage.

**HEIGHT:** 3-5'

**BLOOM TIME:** Aug

**'Autumn Light'**

A large specimen of miscanthus with a full, arching form. Its leaves are green and narrow giving it a delicate appearance, despite its large size. Beautiful fall foliage. One of the more cold hardy varieties.

**HEIGHT:** 4-8'

**BLOOM TIME:** Sept

**'Gracillimus'**

By far the most popular Miscanthus of all. Plants form a graceful, upright mound of narrow green foliage that stays attractive from summer right through the winter. Coppery-pink plumes appear in late fall.

**HEIGHT:** 5-7'

**BLOOM TIME:** Sept

***'Graziella'***

Forms a graceful, upright mound of narrow green leaves. Soft silvery-white plumes appear in late summer, held well above the leaves and remaining attractive for months. Foliage usually develops good copper and orange tones in the autumn.

**HEIGHT:** 5-6'

**BLOOM TIME:** August

***'Little Miss'***

Grows in narrow arching clumps of foliage that emerge green in spring and develop red and purple tones beginning in May, reaching peak color in October and November.

**HEIGHT:** 2-3'

**BLOOM TIME:**

***'Nippon'***

One of the smallest Miscanthus varieties, excellent for smaller gardens. Early blooms are held well above foliage for a nice effect.

**HEIGHT:** 3-4'

**BLOOM TIME:** Jul - Oct

***'Rigoletto'***

Mid sized grass with slender leaves with white midrib and silver variegation. An excellent variegated variety for the smaller garden.

**HEIGHT:** 4-5'

**BLOOM TIME:** Sept - Oct

***'Sarabande'***

Large bronzy-gold flowers over an arching mound of narrow, dark green leaves. The foliage dries and turns a light tan shade for the winter. Useful as a specimen, in the border, or for mass planting.

**HEIGHT:** 4-6'

**BLOOM TIME:** Oct - Nov

***'Strictus'***

Large soft-pink flowers over an upright clump of green leaves, uniquely banded with yellow. The foliage dries and turns a light tan shade for the winter. Cut back to 4 inches in late winter or early spring.

**HEIGHT:** 6-8'

**BLOOM TIME:** Sept - Oct

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## Panicum

ZONE: 4



*Switch Grass*

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### **'Hot Rod'**

Blades emerge bluish-green and then quickly darken to red, until the entire plant is deep maroon. It turns red earlier than other Panicum varieties. This is a wonderful choice for extended landscape interest.

**HEIGHT:** 3-4'

**BLOOM TIME:** Late Summer

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## Panicum virgatum

ZONE: 3



*Switch Grass*

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### **'Northwind'**

An upright steel blue panicum that withstands high winds, drought and extreme cold conditions. The wide thick leaf blades are more substantial than other blue Panicum. Excellent landscape plant.

**HEIGHT:** 4-6'

**BLOOM TIME:** Late Summer

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## Panicum virgaum

ZONE: 4



*Switch Grass*

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### **'Ruby Ribbons'**

Foliage emerges soft blue-green in the spring, becoming wine red in early summer, and deepening as the season progresses. Retains a glaucous hue at base. Late-summer flowers are followed by ornamental seed heads. Upright clumping plants.

**HEIGHT:** 3-4'

**BLOOM TIME:** August

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## Pennisetum alopecuroides

ZONE: 5



*Fountain Grass*

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### **'Hameln'**

Forms an upright mound of arching green leaves, bearing bottlebrush spikes of silvery-white flowers that turn to buff or tan as they dry. Most effective when mass planted. Flowers are excellent for cutting, fresh or dried.

**HEIGHT:** 2-3'

**BLOOM TIME:** Aug

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## **Pennisetum alopecuroides**

**ZONE:** 5



*Fountain Grass*

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### **'Red Head'**

Forms a large mound of arching green leaves. Soft smoky-pink coloured bottlebrush flower spikes appear in mid to late summer, turning to buff as they dry. One of the earliest-flowering selections. Flowers are excellent for cutting, fresh or dried.

**HEIGHT:** 3-4'

**BLOOM TIME:** August

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## **Pennisetum orientale**

**ZONE:** 5



*Oriental Fountain Grass*

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### **'Karley Rose'**

Has improved hardiness and richer color. It forms an upright clump of arching dark-green leaves, with bottlebrush spikes of soft-pink flowers from midsummer into the autumn.

**HEIGHT:** 2-3'

**BLOOM TIME:** Jul - Aug

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## **Phyllostachys bissetii**

**ZONE:** 5



*Running Bamboo*

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### **'Bissetii Dwarf'**

It is one of the first species of the genus to shoot in spring. Shoots are edible but the grove needs to mature to produce a diameter to make harvest worthwhile. This bamboo makes an excellent screen.

**HEIGHT:** 18'

**BLOOM TIME:**

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## **Schizachyrium scoparium**

**ZONE:** 3



*Little Bluestem*

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### **'Prairie Blues'**

This is a plant that is not only beautiful virtually all year, but is truly a low maintenance plant. excessive water and nutrients will likely cause it to flop. So unless you live in the desert, you not only can, but should neglect this plant.

**HEIGHT:** 2-3'

**BLOOM TIME:** Fall-Winter