

Ornamental Grasses

The most significant change in gardening in the last few years has been the renewed interest in hardy herbaceous perennials. These dependable plants that we are rediscovering, were well known to previous generations of gardeners. Only ornamental grasses are entirely new. Garden centres previously offered only a few grasses, such as Blue Fescue and Tuberous Oat Grass or non-hardy varieties of Fountain Grass for summer planting. The selection available today can provide hardy grasses for almost every garden purpose.

Small Grasses

Small clump forming grasses and grass-like plants such as sedges make excellent rockgarden plants or can be mass-planted as attractive groundcovers. They are good companions to spring-flowering bulbs or as border edging.

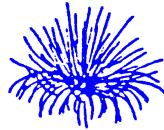
Mid-Size Grasses

Those ornamental grasses that are 45 to 100 cm tall can make nice focal points in either perennial borders or annual bedding schemes. Varieties of Fountain Grass make a nice alternative to the usual Draceana to add height and interest in such settings. Their use in planters and tubs is more frequently seen on porches and patios.

Tall Grasses

The most famous of the tall grasses is the Pampas Grass (Cordateria), unfortunately not hardy in Ontario. For the same spectacular effect, we use Miscanthus varieties or Plume Grass (Erianthus ravennae) whose flowerheads can reach 12 to 15 feet tall.

Grasses can make attractive lawn ornaments and this is the simplest way in which to first use these low-maintenance perennials. A circular bed of generous proportions planted with only one type of ornamental grass will make a splendid showpiece. This is also a way to use those grasses with a spreading habit that precludes their use with other plants. By giving them their own space we can take advantage of their vigor with very satisfying results.



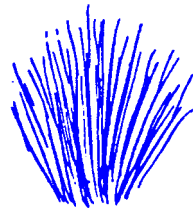
tufted



mounded



upright-divergent



upright-erect



upright-arching



arching

More tips on the other side!

Common Name	Botanical Name	Foliage Colour	Foliage Height	Flower Height	Habit	Comments
Yellow Foxtail	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> ëAureovariegatusí	Green & yellow	45 cm	60 cm	Upright clump	Very showy from mid-April
Tuberous Oat Grass	<i>Arrhenatherum bulbosum</i> ëVariegatumí	Green & white	30 cm		Upright clump	Cut back in mid-summer
Variiegated Giant Reed	<i>Arundo donax</i> ëVersicolorí	Green & white	240 cm	270 cm	Very large upright clump	Not hardy
Blue Lyme Grass	<i>Leymus arenarius</i>	Light blue	75 cm	100 cm	Upright, arching	Spreads aggressively
Plume Grass	<i>Saccharum ravennae</i>	Gray-Green	145 cm	420 cm	Very tall upright clump	Large plumes in late Aug.
Blue Fescue	<i>Festuca</i> spp.	Silver blue	20 cm	35 cm	Tufted mound	Diff. varieties available
Green Fescue	<i>Festuca tenuifolia</i>	Bright green	20 cm	35 cm	Tufted mound	Attractive, fine leaves
Variiegated Manna Grass	<i>Glyceria maxima</i> ëVariegataí	Creamy yellow stripes	50 cm		Mounded upright	Good in wet soil, vigorous
Blue Oat Grass	<i>Helictotrichon sempervirens</i>	Gray-blue	45 cm	120 cm	Tufted mound	Straw coloured in winter
Japanese Blood Grass	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> ëRed Baróní	Green & red	45 cm		Upright, slow	Striking red foliage
June Grass	<i>Koeleria glauca</i>	Blue	20 cm	45 cm	Upright tufted	Good show in early spring
Silver Banner Grass	<i>Miscanthus sacchariflorus</i>	Green w. silver	125 cm	210 cm	Upright, divergent	Silvery plumes in fall
Variiegated Silver Grass	<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> ëVariegatusí	Green & white	165 cm	200 cm	Upright, arching	Excellent form, bright white fol.
Zebra Grass	<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> ëZebrinusí	Green & yellow	180 cm	220 cm	Upright, divergent	Unusual yellow cross-banding
Maiden Grass	<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> ëGracillimusí	Green w. silver	180 cm	200 cm	Upright, arching	Graceful form, fine foliage
Tall Moor Grass	<i>Molinia caerulea</i> ëArundinaceaí	Blue-green	35 cm	210 cm	Upright, divergent	Showy tall flowers
Switch Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Green, red in fall	90 cm	140 cm	Upright	Tiny red flowers in late summer
Dwarf Fountain Grass	<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> ëHamelní	Dark green	45 cm	90 cm	Upright, mounded	Pretty green/white flower heads
Purple Fountain Grass	<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i> ëRubrumí	Deep red	60 cm	90 cm	Upright, arching	Very lovely, NOT HARDY
Gardenerís Garter	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i> ëPictaí	Green & white	75 cm	120 cm	Upright, spreading	Bright green & white stripes
Variiegated Cord Grass	<i>Spartina pectinata</i> ëAureo-marginataí	Dk green w. gold	150 cm	200 cm	Upright, arching	Splendid dense clump in wet or dry soil