

## ART'S BIG TEN ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

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1. *Miscanthus sinensis zebrinus* Zebra Grass 6-8 feet  
*Miscanthus sinensis strictus* Porcupine Grass 6-8 feet  
 These grasses have horizontal stripes and are excellent as specimen plants. They should be planted in masses - perhaps as an 8-10' circle for an entryway or other visible site. Very low maintenance so also will work for the back 40. Bold specimens. Looks great in winter.
2. *Miscanthus sinensis gracillimus* Maiden Grass 5-8 feet  
 also *M. sinensis* 'Sarabande' Sarabande 5-8 feet  
 These grasses are known for their fine textured leaves. They are excellent for massing - particularly in rows or arcs to accentuate the effect of the texture. Looks great in flower and in winter.
3. *Miscanthus sinensis variegatus* Variegated Japanese Silver Grass 5-7 feet  
 also *M. sinensis* 'Morning Light' Silver Variegated Silver Grass 4-5 feet  
 These grasses have stripes running up the leaves. The Variegated form has wider leaves; Morning Light has thin leaves. Both are interesting as specimen plants. Bloom late with dark inflorescence.
4. *Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens* Purple Maiden Grass 3-5 feet  
 Nice purple colored foliage. Particularly good looking when it comes into bloom in July-August. Looks great as specimen or when massed. Interesting into winter.
5. *Calamagrostis acutifolia* 'Karl Foerster' Feather Reed Grass 5-6 feet  
 Upright grass with early flowers (July) that looks excellent all summer and all winter. Very versatile. Not as tall as *Miscanthus* species. Needs very little care - easy to divided. Great plant!
6. *Pennisetum alopecuroides* Fountain Grass 3-4 feet  
 also *P. alopecuroides* 'Hameln' Dwarf Fountain Grass 1-2 feet  
 Both of these fountain grasses are indispensable in garden settings. They compliment colorful annuals while giving a pleasing texture. They bloom in August and the blooms are very attractive.
7. *Deschampsia caespitosa* 'Goldstaub' Tufted Hair Grass 2-3 feet  
 Early blooming short grass. Grown more for foliage and as a backdrop for more colorful annuals or perennials. Very interesting foliage - definitely a show stopper in the MSU display gardens.
8. *Erianthus ravennae* Ravenna Grass 9-12 feet  
 If you want size, this is the grass to grow. Tops 12 feet when in bloom and carries well into the Winter. As close to Pampus Grass as we'll come up here in Michigan. Blooms are very showy in late summer.
9. *Molinia caerulea arundinacea* 'Skyracer' Tall Purple Moor Grass 7-8 feet  
 This is a great specimen throwing up big, airy flower heads over dramatic foliage. Not necessarily a Specimen but combines well with other perennials. The straight species *M. caerulea* tend to be shorter.

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| 10. | <i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Heavy Metal'<br>also <i>P. virgatum</i> 'Rotstrahlbusch' | Switch Grass<br>Red Switch Grass | 4-5 feet<br>3-4 feet |
|-----|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|
- Both of these cultivars are great garden performers. The foliage is interesting; metallic-blue for Heavy Metal and red for Rotstrahlbusch'. The airy flowers come relatively early and are very showy.
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| 11. | <i>Chasmanthium latifolia</i> | Northern Sea Oats | 3-5 feet |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
- Excellent ornamental seed heads very pretty in late summer into fall and winter. Will spread but not too quickly.

### Shade Tolerant Ornamental Grasses

Most ornamental grasses are best in full sun. The following can tolerate some shade but most still have best performance in full sun:

*Calamagrostis acutifolia* - looks nice against dark backgrounds

*Deschampsia caespitosa*

*Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens* - ok for shade but not as effective as in sun

*Phalaris arundinacea* - Ribbon Grass - spreads by underground runners. Good for dry, shady or other difficult sites.

### Moisture Tolerant Ornamental Grasses

Most ornamental grasses perform good drainage, even when grown close to water for the special effect. The following can tolerate some flooding, although none will perform best in this environment:

*Arundo donax* - Giant Reed Grass

*Calamagrostis acutifolia*

*Miscanthus* species but esp. *Miscanthus sacchariflorus* - this species spreads by underground runners so be careful.

*Panicum virgatum*

*Phalaris arundinacea* - Ribbon Grass - spreads by underground runners, aggressive.

*Spartina pectinata* - Marsh Grass - well-adapted to wet sites.

### Flowering Times

June

*Calamagrostis acutifolia*

*Deschampsia caespitosa*

*Molinia caerulea*

*Pennisetum setaceum*

July

*Panicum virgatum*

*Pennisetum alopecuroides*

August

*Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens*

*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberfeder

September

*Erianthus ravennae*

*Miscanthus sinensis stricta*

*Miscanthus sinensis zebrinus*

October

*Miscanthus sinensis gracillimus*



## A Couple Sources for Ornamental Grasses

Local nurseries are stocking more grasses - be sure and obtain named cultivars when possible. The following are a few retail and commercial nurseries that stock ornamental grasses

Kurt Blumel Inc. Nurseries  
2740 Greene Lane  
Baldwin, MD 2103-9523

Limerock Ornamental Grasses  
RD 1 Box 111-C  
Port Matilda, PA 16870

Greenleaf Ent., Inc.  
17 W. Main Street  
Leola, PA 17540

Bordine's Better Blooms  
1835 S. Rochester  
Rochester Hills, MI 48307-3533

### Ornamental Grasses on Display on Campus at the 1997 MSU Horticultural Demonstration Gardens

*Calamagrostis arundinacea* var. *brachytricha*  
*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*  
*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'  
*Calamagrostis* 'Overdam'  
*Deschampsia caespitosa* 'Goldstaub'  
*Erianthus ravennae*  
*Festuca amethystina* 'Superba'  
*Festuca cinerea* 'Blausilber'  
*Festuca ovina glauca* 'Elijah Blue'  
*Helictotrichon sempervirens*  
*Helictotrichon sempervirens*  
*Imperata cylindrica* 'Red Baron'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Graziella'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Little Nicky'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Purpurascens'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Sarabande'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'  
*Molinia caerulea ssp arundinacea* 'Transparent'  
*Molinia caerulea ssp arundinacea* 'Skyracer'  
*Molinia caerulea ssp. arund.* 'Staefa'  
*Molinia caerulea ssp. arund.* 'Transparent'  
*Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata'  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal'  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Pathfinder'  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Rotstrahlbusch'  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides*  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Cassian'  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Little Bunny'  
*Pennisetum caudatum*  
*Seslaria caerulea*  
*Seslaria heufeliana*

### Some Herbaceous Perennials that compliment Ornamental Grasses

*Achillea* 'Moonshine' or 'Anthea'  
*Artemisia schmidtiana* 'Silver Mound'  
*Aster dumosa* 'Purple Dome'  
*Boltonia asteroides* 'Snowbank'  
*Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam'  
*Coreopsis rosea*  
*Coreopsis verticillata* 'Zagreb'  
*Buddleia* 'Nanho Blue'  
*Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'  
*Eupatorium purpureum* 'Gateway'  
*Helenium autumnale* 'Moerheim's Beauty'  
*Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Snow Lady'  
*Nepeta x faassenii* 'Six Hills Giant'  
*Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red'  
*Perovskia atriplicifolia*  
*Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm'  
*Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain'  
*Salvia x superba* 'May Night'  
*Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue'  
*Scabiosa columbaria* 'Pink Mist'  
*Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'  
*Sedum maximum* 'Atropurpureum'  
*Veronica* 'Sunny Border Blue'