

## Art's "Big Ten" Ornamental Grasses

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1. <i>Miscanthus sinensis zebrinus</i>	Zebra Grass	6-8 feet
<i>Miscanthus sinensis strictus</i>	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. <i>Miscanthus sinensis gracillimus</i>	Maiden Grass	5-8 feet
<i>M. sinensis</i> '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. <i>Miscanthus sinensis variegatus</i>	Variegated Japanese Silver Grass	5-7 feet
also <i>M. sinensis</i> '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. <i>Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens</i>	Purple Maiden Grass	3-5 feet
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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. <i>Calamagrostis acutifolia</i> 'Karl Foerster'	Feather Reed Grass	5-6 feet
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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. <i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i>	Fountain Grass	3-4 feet
also <i>P. alopecuroides</i> '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. <i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i> 'Goldstaub'	Tufted Hair Grass	2-3 feet
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Early blooming short grass. Grown more for foliage and as a backdrop for more colorful annuals or perennials. Very interesting foliage - definitely a showstopper in the MSU display gardens.

8. <i>Erianthus ravennae</i>	Ravenna Grass	9-12 feet
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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. <i>Molinia caerulea arundinacea</i> 'Skyracer'	Tall Purple Moor Grass	7-8 feet
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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.

10. <i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Heavy Metal'	Switch Grass	4-5 feet
also <i>P. Virgatum</i> 'Rotstrahlbusch'	Red Switch Grass	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.

## 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 site.

## 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-adaapted to wet sites.

## Flowering Times

June
<i>Calamagrostis acutifolia</i> <i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i> <i>Molinia caerulea</i> <i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>
July
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> <i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i>
August
<i>Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens</i> <i>Miscanthus sinensis 'Silberfeder'</i>
September
<i>Erianthus ravennae</i> <i>Miscanthus sinensis stricta</i> <i>Miscanthus sinensis zebrinus</i>
October
<i>Miscanthus sinensis gracillimus</i>

## 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

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

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

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