

## Extra tips on ornamentals

Ornamentals normally encroach eight to 10 inches a year. That's great for Richard Kaiser, who is using them to fill in certain areas at Fairfield Glade Community Club outside Crossville, Tenn.

And Guy Robbins, superintendent of grounds at the University of Tennessee at Martin, added: "You can get a bunch of them in a hurry."

"You plant one for \$5 and it makes a plant that year. The next year it's several times larger. Then you can divide from that one plant and get several."

For superintendents who want to confine them, Robbins said to cut them back in late February. That, he said, is their "only maintenance."

Superintendent Lynn Newton's crews at Fulton Country Club in South Fulton, Tenn., use hedge trimmers or chain saws and cut the ornamentals off at three inches above ground.

Dr. Eliot Roberts takes an ax to his bigger grasses but said the roots are shallow and easy to reach.

Seeded types won't grow in cold regions, Roberts said.

He warned to not get started with an ornamental grass that has marginal winter hardiness. "You want them to spread and relandscape areas," he said.

*Giant reed, plume grass  
Chinese silver grass all  
produce beautiful flowers and  
seedheads.*

— Dr. Eliot Roberts.



## The lowdown on high grasses

Giant reed grass, plume grass and Chinese silver grass have won the heart of Dr. Eliot Roberts at his home in Sparta, Tenn., where he is still busy experimenting in his retirement.

University of Tennessee at Martin Superintendent of Grounds Guy Robbins singled out maiden and fountain grasses as excellent ornamentals, and warned superintendents that he has been unimpressed with other types, many of which "resemble weeds."

Here's the lowdown, along with a recommendation from superintendent Lynn Newton and club member Harry Reams of Fulton Country Club in South Fulton, Tenn.:

- Giant reed grass: All green, it grows eight to 15 feet tall, sports wide leaf blades, and produces bamboo.

- Plume grass: Also called ravennae grass, it grows seven to 15 feet tall, has narrower blades, has a less heavy stalk, and shines a silver mid-vein down through its leaves.

- Chinese silver grass: It reaches four to six feet high, is very fine and wiry.

All three produce beautiful flowers and seedheads late in the summer, Roberts said.

- Fountain grass: Called pennisetum alopecuroides by scientists, it is "spectacular,"

Robbins said, starting to bloom a tan color in late July.

- Maiden grass (miscanthus): Though there are 25 to 40 types, Robbins has narrowed them down to "some we find more interesting over a longer period of time": miscanthus sinensis gracillimus, miscanthus gracillimus and variegated miscanthus.

"We really, really like miscanthus sinensis gracillimus. That's our pride and joy," Robbins said. "It has a fine texture, fountain-like growth, gets 4-1/2 to 5 feet tall, has a beautiful plume bloom. It's quite showy. It comes up early in the spring. In the winter when we have a hard freeze and it turns brown, it stands erect and the wind moving around produces an interesting sound."

- Hasta, yuca and zebra grasses: Newton and Reams also use these perennials. The broad-leafed hasta has low-greening foliage that blooms late in the year. Yuca's foliage reaches two feet in height, with a long stem that blooms white for two months a year and foliage that remains year-round. Zebra grass is similar to pampus but with a little wider leaf and horizontal yellow stripes. It comes out in early March and gains height and fullness throughout the summer, going dormant after the first frost or two in October and adding "a very nice effect for the winter. It gives a tan color but doesn't deteriorate."

## Ornamentals: A lot for a little in maintenance

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prevent worn spots around tees "where we couldn't control the cart traffic without ropes and chains. So we use them to direct the flow of traffic."

"I don't like chains and posts and ropes to prevent carts from

going to areas."

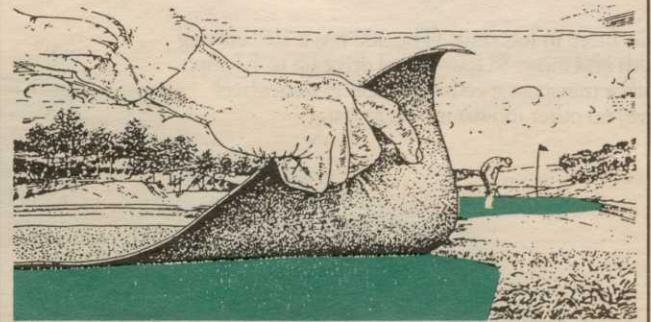
Fulton Country Club's 37 ornamental beds have received "a tremendous amount of praise" from visiting golfers, who have taken the idea back to their home courses, Newton said. He added that he and Reams have

shared information and ideas with golf course officials in Western Kentucky, Western Tennessee, Southern Missouri and Southern Illinois. "Some of our beds are five or six feet wide and 20, 30 or 40 feet long," he said. "Some are 30-by-30."

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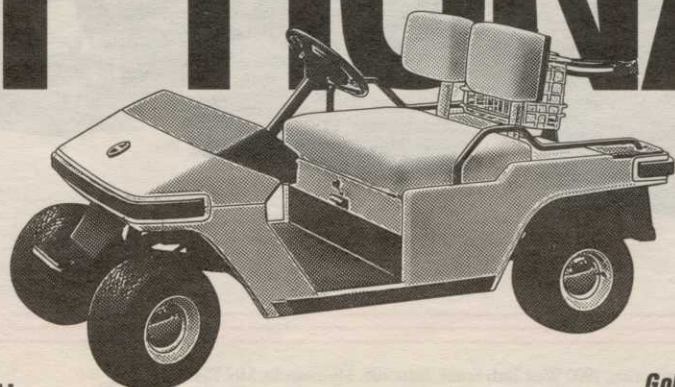
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