

Ornamental Grasses – What You Didn't Know

We spend a lot of time maintaining and perfecting our functional lawn grasses, but what about adding ornamental grasses to the landscape? They have an array of uses, making them even more versatile than perennials.

I recommend using these top choices:

- Carex (Sedge)
- Panicum (Switch grass)
- Miscanthus (Maiden grass)
- Pennisetum (Fountain grass)



So what is so great about them?

Deer Don't Eat Them: These grasses have proven time after time to be deer tolerant, and are not on the preferred dining menu! This makes them an excellent choice to incorporate, giving you diversity with wonderful texture, form, and color without the threat of being nibbled on.

Can Withstand Tough Conditions: Varieties of Carex and Panicum are also native, being able to adapt well in low fertile soils, and needing very little maintenance because they are drought tolerant and don't require a lot of fertilizer. They can provide erosion control for along our beautiful shorelines and are ideal for creating sustainable rain gardens.

Provide Seasonal Interest: But the use of grasses doesn't stop at native plantings. Ornamental grasses are wonderful for adding multiple seasons of interest in the garden. Blending taller growing varieties of Miscanthus and Pennisetum in the perennial border background will enhance the garden's overall composition. Lower growing varieties such as Carex, Panicum, and dwarf Pennisetum can create a textured foreground, providing contrast around perennials in the garden. No fall or winter landscape should be without them. Their fluffy "coiffures" will exhibit a delicate structure that lends a touch of charm to the harsh winter landscape.

Not All Grasses Are Green: An assortment of tones exists including soothing blues, energetic yellows, spicy reds, variegated (white and green), and cream-gold colored margins. Some of the most vibrant grass colors occur in the fall, with the added bonus of their coppery plumes (seed heads).

Adds Movement & Catches Light: No other plant can add movement and catch light like ornamental grasses. Whether planted in masses or as individual specimen focal points, the graceful, arching form of Maiden and Fountain grasses will almost give a "voice" to your garden as they softly rustle in the wind. Planting in drifts will create a sense of movement, as the grasses will appear to continuously flow through the garden. Be sure to place them where they can "catch the light," which will shine through their foliage and flower heads, making them glow and shimmer in the breezes.

So the next time you are gazing at that expanse of manicured lawn, consider minimizing it and all the **time and energy** it requires. Most of all, you will get your money's worth from adding ornamental grasses to your home. Not only are they relatively inexpensive, they are easily dividable, allowing you to freely make more plants.

Who wouldn't want a plant that doesn't need weekly grooming, watering, and fertilizing and practically propagates itself!