

Ornamental Grasses in Xeriscape

GRASSES IN THE HOME LANDSCAPE

Ornamental grasses are a popular choice for home landscapes. Many varieties, planted individually or in masses, add visual interest and structure to gardens with their color, unusual forms, textures and seed heads. As dynamic plants, ornamental grasses change dramatically in shape and color throughout the seasons. The rippling and rustling of grasses in the wind add motion and sound to otherwise quiet landscapes, maintaining interest in the fall and winter seasons.

Water requirements for ornamental grasses vary, allowing them to thrive in a wide range of cultural situations across all four seasons. The low maintenance plants only require being cut to the ground each spring in order to renew themselves.

Refer to the table below to evaluate the different ornamental grasses for your landscape. Height depends on available water supply, and the listed heights include seed heads or plumes.



Ornamental grasses thrive in a wide range of cultural situations across all four seasons.

PERENNIAL ORNAMENTAL GRASSES FOR COLORADO SPRINGS

NAME	HEIGHT/WIDTH	SHAPE	SUN & WATER NEEDS	COMMENTS (INCLUDING ELEVATION)
Big Bluestem <i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	7' / 2-3'	upright	sun low-very low	Purple fall color. Crow's foot-shaped seed head. Very informal. Good naturalistic plant. Up to 7,000 ft.
Blue Oat or Avena Grass <i>Helictotrichon sempervirens</i>	3' / 3'	mound	sun/part shade moderate-low	Blue leaves, arching habit. Good in perennial flower beds. Up to 8,500 ft.
Blue Fescue <i>Festuca ovina glauca</i>	8-12" / 8-12"	mound	sun/part shade low	Blue leaves. Reseeds readily. Formal look when massed. Up to 8,500 ft.
Korean Feather Reed Grass <i>Calamagrostis brachytricha</i>	4' / 2-3'	upright	sun/shade moderate	Less formal appearance than other Feather Reed Grasses. Flowers last into winter. Up to 7,500 ft.

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PERENNIAL ORNAMENTAL GRASSES FOR COLORADO SPRINGS

continued

NAME	HEIGHT/WIDTH	SHAPE	SUN & WATER NEEDS	COMMENTS (INCLUDING ELEVATION)
Eulalia or Maiden Grass <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> spp. ‘Adagio’: smaller than other Miscanthus, seed heads extend beyond top of foliage ‘Morning Light’: fine-textured foliage edged with white, vase overall form ‘Gracillimus’: fine-textured foliage, rounded overall form ‘Variegatus’: broad leaves, strongly striped with white ‘Yaku Jima’: usually smaller than other Miscanthus ‘Zerbrinus’: green leaves with irregularly spaced stripes of yellow variegation	4–5' / 4–5'	vase	sun moderate–low	Many cultivars available. Feathery plumes. Up to 7,000 ft. (<i>M. sinensis</i> ‘Gracillimus’ up to 8,500 ft.)
Feather Reed Grass <i>Calamagrostis acutiflora</i> ‘Karl Foerster’: solid green leaves, Plant of the Year 2001 ‘Overdam’: variegated green/white leaves, more shade-tolerant than Karl Foerster	4–6' / 2–3'	upright	sun/part shade moderate–low	Golden fall color. Wheat-like plumes. Formal appearance. Up to 7,500 ft.
Japanese Blood Grass <i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	6–12' / 6–12'	upright	sun/part sun low–very low	Red leaves. Rhizomatous. Up to 6,500 ft.
Little Bluestem <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	18–24' / 18–24'	upright	sun low–very low	Blue in summer. Native. Pinkish-tan fall color. Up to 7,000 ft.
Ravenna or Plume Grass <i>Erianthus ravennae</i>	7–12' / 3–5'	upright	sun low	Hardy alternative to Pampas Grass. Up to 6,000 ft.
Sea Oats <i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	4' / 2–3'	upright	sun/shade moderate	Very upright in sun. More lax in shade. Dangling oat-like spikelets. Up to 7,000 ft.
Switch Grass <i>Panicum virgatum</i> ‘Heavy Metal’: sturdy upright cultivar with blue-green foliage ‘Prairie Sky’: vase-shaped with blue-green leaves, the bluest variety ‘Rehbraun’: vase-shaped, green in summer with red-tipped leaves by August ‘Shenandoah’: green leaves tipped w/red by August, wine-colored by September	3–5' / 3–4'	clump	sun/part shade low–very low	Many cultivars available. Native. Airy panicles of seeds. Yellow fall color in species. Up to 7,000 ft.

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