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The Best of Every Season

Fountain Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides

Plant Height: 4 feet

Flower Height: 5 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Chinese Pennisetum, Foxtail Fountain Grass

Description:

Fine textured bright green foliage changes to a golden tan in fall; blooms are large dark reddish-brown bottlebrush plumes that persist until winter; beautiful as an accent or massed in borders or rock garden

Ornamental Features

Fountain Grass has masses of beautiful racemes of dark red flowers with brown overtones rising above the foliage in late summer, which are most effective when planted in groupings. The brown seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance in mid fall. Its grassy leaves are green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous coppery-bronze in the fall.

Landscape Attributes

Fountain Grass is an herbaceous perennial grass with a shapely form and gracefully arching stems. It brings an extremely fine and delicate texture to the garden composition and should be used to full effect.



Fountain Grass
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Fountain Grass fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Fountain Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting



Fountain Grass
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Fountain Grass will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity extending to 5 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 24 inches. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Fountain Grass is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.