



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Calamagrostis acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Feather Reed Grass is an ornamental grass that attains a height of 5 to 6 feet. It is hopelessly confused with *C. acutiflora* ‘Stricta’. Foliage usually reaches no more than 3 feet tall, but flowers are held several feet above the foliage. The medium green leaves of this plant are lanceolate in shape and may reach a length of 5 to 7 feet. They also exhibit good fall and winter color. The inflorescence of this plant is a compact, spikelike panicle that is up to 12 inches long. The inflorescence is loosely branched and has a pinkish white or reddish cast. They appear in the summer and are followed by attractive seedheads that are used in flower arrangements. This plant spreads by short rhizomes which allows it to slowly increase in diameter.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Calamagrostis acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’  
**Pronunciation:** kal-uh-muh-GRAW-stiss ack-yoo-tif-FLOR-uh  
**Common name(s):** Foerster’s Feather Reed Grass  
**Family:** *Gramineae*  
**Plant type:** herbaceous; ornamental grass  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 9 (Fig. 1)  
**Planting month for zone 7:** year round  
**Planting month for zone 8:** year round  
**Planting month for zone 9:** year round  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** specimen; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; cut flowers; border; accent

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### **Description**

**Height:** 5 to 6 feet  
**Spread:** 5 to 7 feet  
**Plant habit:** upright  
**Plant density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** fine

#### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** lanceolate  
**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** more than 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** brown or tan  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

#### **Flower**

**Flower color:** pink; purple  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

#### **Fruit**

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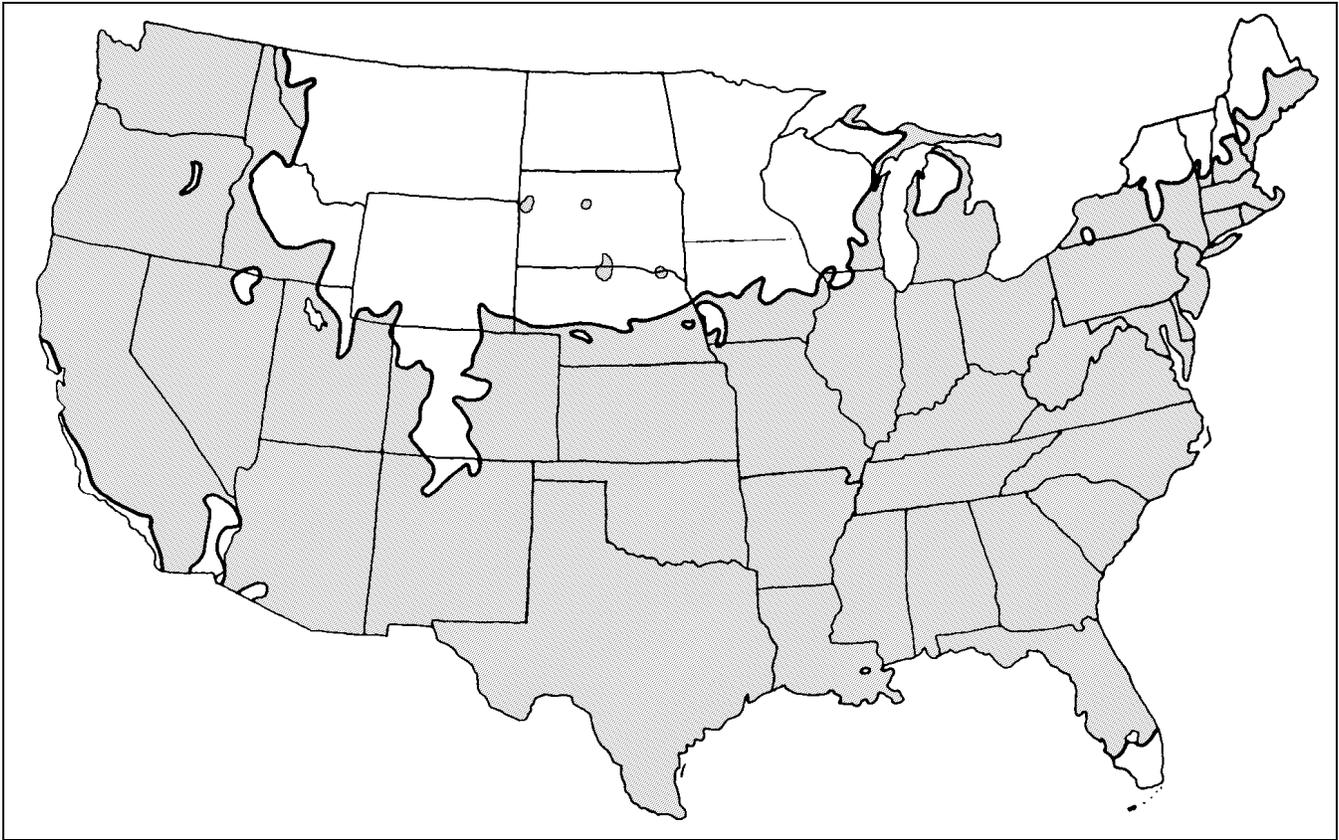


Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** tan  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; clay; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; loam;  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

Feather Reed Grass is excellent for naturalized areas in freshwater bogs and swamps, around lakes and ponds, and along streams. It is suited for planting near water gardens due to its tolerance of wet soil. It is a great specimen plant but also looks great planted in mass. It can provide a tall screen or windbreak and is useful for erosion control.

This grass can grow in an area of the landscape receiving full sun or partial shade. It prefers wet brackish soils but will thrive in heavy clay soils with less moisture. The size of this

plant depends on the moisture supply; it will grow larger with increased moisture levels, and in cooler climates.

The propagation of Feather Reed Grass is accomplished by plant divisions.

**Pests and Diseases**

Usually free of pests and diseases.