



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

***Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'¹**

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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

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-84, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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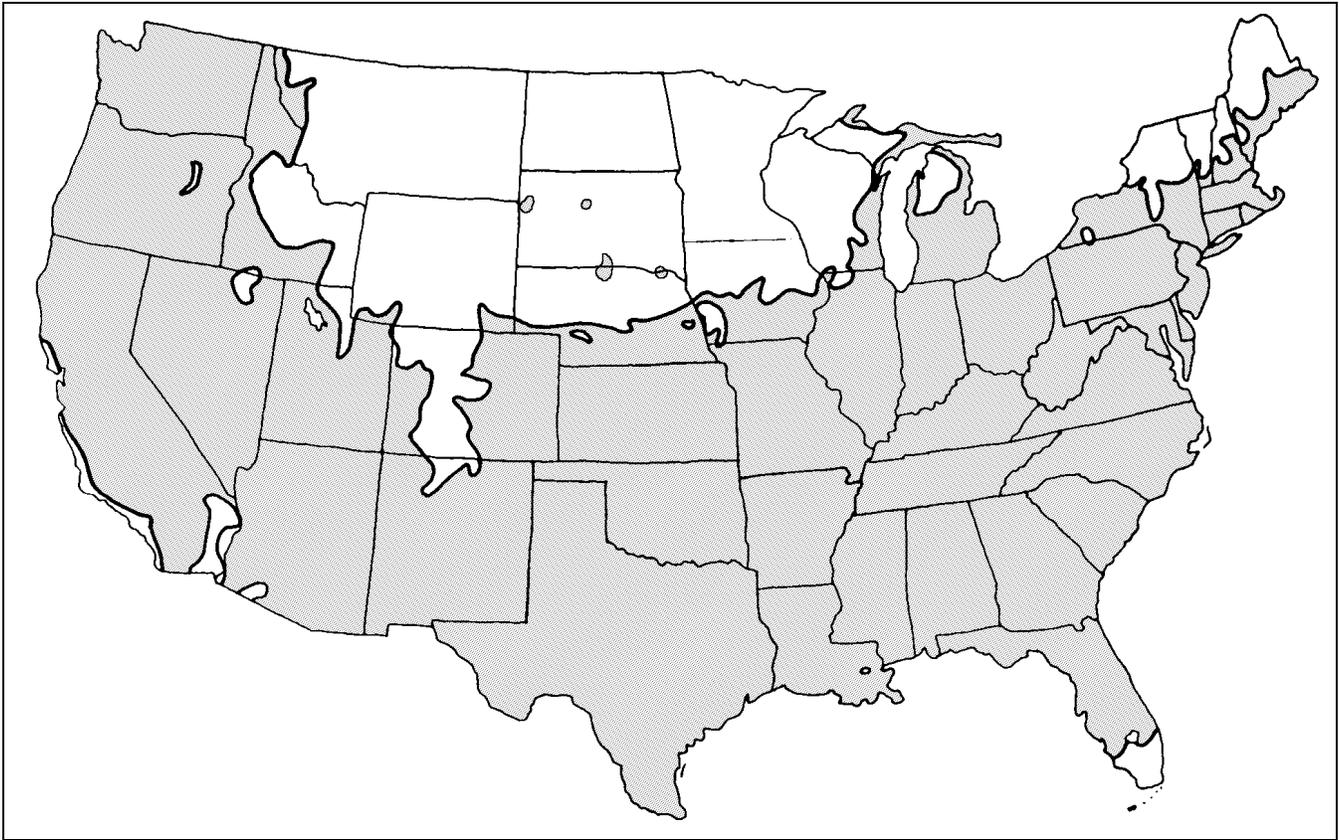


Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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.