



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

***Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Purpurascens’¹**

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Introduction

Maiden Grass is a gracefully arching, fine-textured grass that forms dense, reddish-green clumps. Slender leaves originate in a clump, spreading out and up like a fountain. The 3- to 4-foot-tall clumps bear silver-pink flowers in late summer and fall which can be used for drying or as a dye plant. Their pinkish or silvery 8- to 10-inch-long plumes persist into the winter. Foliage is flexible and blows easily in the wind. This shrub-like grass turns to a rich orange or reddish-purple in early fall; the fall color lasts through the winter.

General Information

Scientific name: *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Purpurascens’
Pronunciation: miss-KANTH-us sye-NEN-sis
Common name(s): ‘Purpurascens’ Japanese Silver Grass, Flame Grass
Family: *Gramineae*
Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass
USDA hardiness zones: 7 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: mass planting; border; container or above-ground planter; screen; accent
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 3 to 4 feet
Spread: 3 to 5 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: lanceolate
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: purple or red
Fall color: red
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pink
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: no fruit
Fruit characteristic: no fruit

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay; slightly alkaline

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Use and Management

Maiden Grass is frequently used in the landscape as a specimen or screen. It is also employed in group plantings forming a nice mass of fine-textured foliage. Use Maiden Grass as an accent or mass planted in a large-scale landscape, such as around a commercial building to add a touch of soft elegance and texture. The slightest breeze moves the foliage allowing the landscape to 'come alive'. Many people prefer to cut the grass back to the ground in the spring so new green growth is not covered with last year's dried, brown foliage.

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Maiden Grass requires a location in the landscape that receives full sun, but it is adaptable to most well-drained soils. This ornamental grass is quite drought tolerant. Miscanthus sinensis is a warm season grass and transplants best in the spring. Provide good drainage at the planting site.

Other cultivars include: 'Condensatus', coarser leaf texture than species, mid-summer bloom, 7 to 8 feet tall; 'Gracillimus', narrower leaves than species, fall bloom, upright growth habit from 5 to 8 feet tall; 'Purpurescens', reddish foliage in summer, purple-red foliage in fall, silver pink inflorescence, mid-summer bloom, 4 to 5 feet tall; 'Silver Feather', silvery white flowers in mid-summer; 'Strictus', horizontal yellow bands on foliage, upright growth habit, 6 to 8 feet tall; 'Variegatus', white variegation on leaf margin, does relatively well in partial shade, to 7 feet tall; 'Yaku Jima', more compact, 3 to 4 feet tall; 'Zebrinus', horizontal yellow bands on foliage, wide spreading habit, to 7 feet tall.

The propagation of *Miscanthus sinensis* is by division in the spring.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Rust diseases occasionally infest the foliage but it often goes away in drier weather.