Cymbopogon citratus

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Introduction

This herbaceous perennial originated in India and adapts to Florida conditions quite well (Fig. 1). Foliage emerges from a clump typical of the grasses. Leaves remain green most of the year turning dark red to scarlet in fall and winter. Unlike many of the grasses, the flower display is insignificant.

General Information

Scientific name: Cymbopogon citratus
Pronunciation: sim-baw-POE-gawn sit-TRAY-tiss
Common name(s): Lemongrass
Family: Gramineae
Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: accent; border; mass planting
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 4 to 6 feet
Spread: 4 to 6 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel

Figure 1. Lemongrass.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf type and persistence:** fragrant
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches
**Leaf color:** green
**Fall color:** red
**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** no flowers
**Flower characteristic:** no flowers

**Fruit**

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

**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:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
**Drought tolerance:** moderate
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

This and many other grasses look nice grouped together in a mass planting. Space them several feet apart to form a solid mass within one year after planting. The grass can spread fairly rapidly and can become somewhat invasive in subtropical climates.

Plants are often located in a scented garden or perennial border. The nice texture and scented leaves makes it a good plant for court yards, patios and other places where people can enjoy it. Scented oils are extracted from the leaves. Lemongrass may become mildly invasive in the yard with its aggressive, spreading habit.

Pests and Diseases

No major problems prevent use of Lemongrass with the possible exception of the somewhat invasive habit.