Tripsacum floridana

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Introduction

Florida Tripsacum is an herbaceous perennial originating in South Florida that forms a dense, upright clump of 3-foot-long leaves (Fig. 1). These flat blades of grass grow from a short, thick, underground rhizome. Blades are noticeably more narrow than Tripsacum dactyloides. This grass attains a height of about 2 to 3 feet and spreads to form a clump up to 6-feet-wide. The flowers appear in somewhat showy spikes, with rust-colored anthers. These spikes appear in the spring and summer.

General Information

Scientific name: Tripsacum floridana
Pronunciation: trip-SAY-kum flor-rid-DAY-nuh
Common name(s): Florida Gamma Grass, Dwarf Fakahatchee Grass, Florida Tripsacum
Family: Gramineae
Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass
USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: accent; border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 3 to 4 feet
Spread: 4 to 6 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Figure 1. Florida Gamma Grass.
**Tripsacum floridana -- Florida Gamma Grass**

**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** linear  
**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen; evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** unknown

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

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Other

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**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

Florida Tripsacum has proven to be an outstanding landscape plant and may be used as an accent in ground cover beds. It is also useful to stabilize banks and steep slopes. This grass may also create a nice edging along streams and ponds. The adaptability of Florida Tripsacum makes it well suited for planting in water retention and detention areas. These areas are often wet or inundated for a period of time, then become very dry.

Florida Tripsacum needs a full sun or light shade position in the landscape and adapts to dense and light soils. It is tolerant of wet soil conditions but is also quite drought tolerant. It is one of the most shade tolerant grasses, and naturalizes readily in a moist site. It is listed as an endangered plant in Florida.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.