Cortaderia selloana

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Introduction

Pampas Grass forms large, impressive clumps, 8 to 10 feet high and wide, with beautiful silver to white feathery plumes arising on female plants in summer and autumn (Fig. 1). This vigorous ornamental grass is widely used as a lawn specimen but its quick growth rate and large size make it unsuitable for most home landscapes. However, it is ideal for barrier or windbreak plantings and has a place in larger areas such as along highways or in commercial or industrial landscapes.

General Information

Scientific name: Cortaderia selloana
Pronunciation: kor-tuh-DEER-ee-uh sel-loe-AY-nuh
Common name(s): Pampas Grass
Family: Poaceae
Plant type: ornamental grass; perennial; herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: border; mass planting; specimen; accent; cut flowers
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 8 to 10 feet
Spread: 8 to 10 feet

Plant habit: upright
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: serrate  
Leaf shape: linear  
Leaf venation: parallel  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink  
Flower characteristic: fall flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: dry or hard  
Fruit color: tan  
Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant

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

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant
Use and Management

In sun or partial shade, Pampas Grass grows well in most soils except very wet ones, tolerating drought and salt spray, making it especially attractive for seaside landscapes. Be careful in the placement of Pampas Grass in the landscape, however, as it gets larger than most people realize. Many are planted in residential landscapes and later removed because it has grown too large. Children may cut themselves if they accidentally fall into the plant because the edges of the leaves are sharply serrated. Plant six to eight feet apart in a mass planting.


Propagation is by division.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.