A photograph of a garden bed featuring several clumps of ornamental grasses. On the left, there are tall, thin grasses with light brown, feathery plumes. In the center and right, there are clumps of green grasses with upright, purple flower spikes. The garden bed is mulched with dark brown wood chips. In the background, a house with a dark roof and light-colored walls is visible, along with a hillside under a clear sky.

Easy and Beautiful Ornamental Grasses

Weber Basin Water Conservancy District

David Rice

Conservation Programs Manager



Grasses are found in every part of the world in all kinds of habitats.

- Mountains
 - Deserts
 - Bogs and Wetlands
 - Prairies
 - Jungles
 - Under Water
- 



For this class, we are focusing on some grasses that are cold hardy, water efficient and look great for areas along the Wasatch Front.

- *Miscanthus*
- *Calamagrostis*
- *Panicum*
- *Pennisetum (some)*

- *Carex (some)*
- *Fescue*
- *Erianthus*
- *Helictotricon*
- *Sporabolis*
- *Schizachyrium*

Range in Sizes of Grasses from 4 inches to 15 ft (excluding bamboos)



Grouping Grasses

▶ Evergreen

- ▶ Look good early in the spring
- ▶ are not cut back to the ground every year.

▶ Non-Evergreen

- ▶ Are not showy until later in the summer and fall
- ▶ Need to be cut back to the ground every year.

Most are hardy to a zone 5 climate and some to zone 4. All the grasses used in the District's garden are perennials.

Nearly all grasses prefer full sun.

Why Use Ornamental Grasses?

- Relatively very little care- once a year clean up.
- Most are drought tolerant.
- Late summer and early winter effect, in form and color.
- Disease and pest free.
- Natural look.
- Long lived.
- There is a grass the meets the size you want or need.



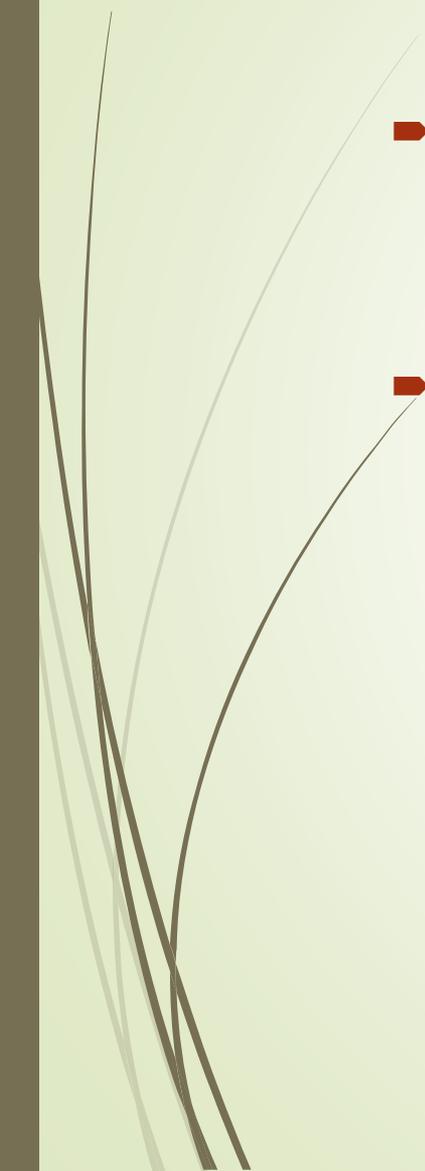
Maintenance for Most Grasses

- ▶ One time per year cut back
- ▶ The evergreen or semi-evergreen types need cutting back by 1/2 to 1/3 and the dead leaves raked out in the spring.
- ▶ Non-evergreen varieties need to be cut to the ground each year
(Do it spring or fall when you have time- when you are doing other pruning is a good time to clean them up if there isn't snow on them)
- ▶ Some may need divided every 4-5 years.
- ▶ Very little fertilizer needed.
- ▶ Not prone to pests or diseases.
- ▶ Water accordingly for soil types and variety
Most prefer deeper watering less frequently





Miscanthus Varieties



- **Miscanthus** is a genus of about 15 species of perennial grasses native to subtropical and tropical regions of Africa and southern Asia, with one species (*M. sinensis*) extending north into temperate eastern Asia.
- *Miscanthus sinensis* is the most common for Utah landscapes. These are the large grasses. They will need room to grow and do need divided after the clump starts dying in the middle (time frame will vary by site)

Miscanthus

Miscanthus sinensis Var.



- Large to 6 ft tall. Many varieties with varied texture, color and habit.
- Seed heads emerge late summer into early fall.
- Most will not reseed in our climate (growing season not long enough)
- These can be cut to the ground when they are dormant (spring or fall)

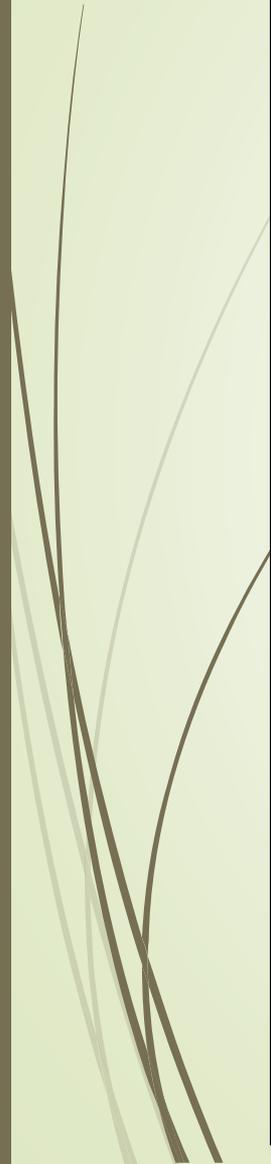
Cosmopolitan Maiden Grass

Miscanthus sinensis 'Cosmopolitan'





Miscanthus sinensis
'Strictus'
Zebra Grass











Cosmopolitan
Maiden Grass
Miscanthus sinensis
'Cosmopolitan'



Miscanthus - Border Bandit and Morning Lights



Maiden Grass- *Miscanthus sinensis*







Zebra Grass



Miscanthus synensis
'Variegatus'











Calamagrostis- Reed Grasses

Calamagrostis, (reedgrass), is a genus in the grass family Poaceae with about 260 species that occur mainly in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere.

Calamagrostis x acutiflora is the most common used here in the landscape trade. Several great cultivations are used. Karl Foerster, Avalanch, Overdam, Eldorado, etc.





Karl Foerster
Feather Reed Grass
*Calamagrostis x
acutiflora*
"Karl Foerster"





Eldorado Feather
Reed Grass
Galamagrostis acutiflora
'Eldorado'



Avalanche Feather
Reed Grass
Calamagrostis x acutiflora
'Avalanche'

Korean Feather Reed Grass





Panicum- Switch Grasses

- ▶ Soft textured grasses with a lot of color variation.







Shenandoah
Switch Grass
Panicum virgatum
'Shenandoah'



North Wind
Switch Grass
Panicum virgatum
North Wind

Dallas Blues
Switch Grass
Panicum virgatum
Dallas Blues'





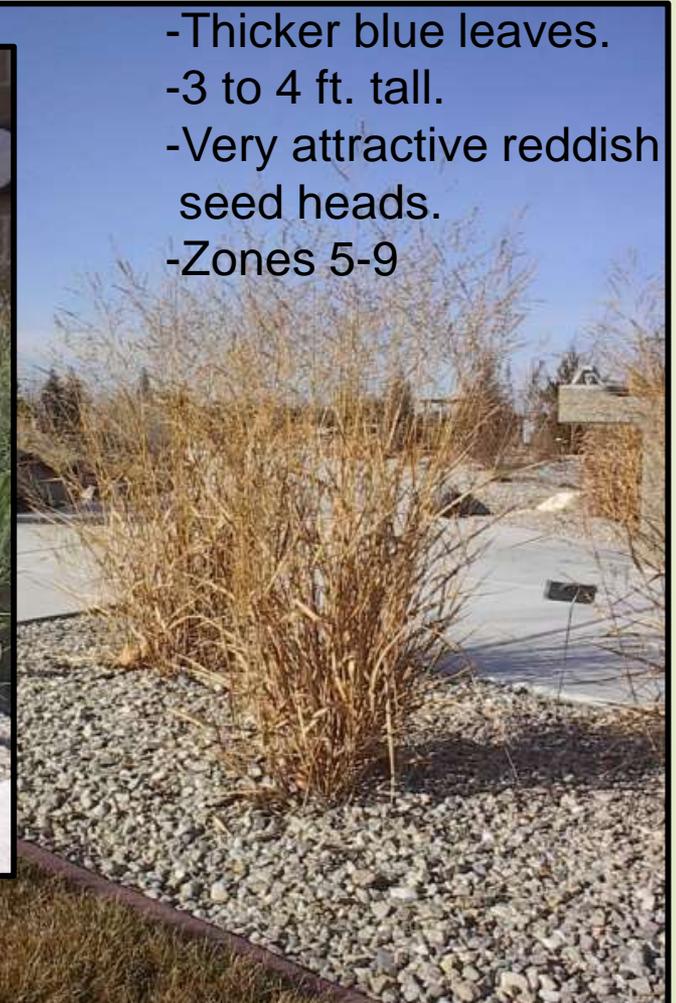
Shenandoah
Switch Grass
Panicum virgatum
'Shenandoah'

Heavy Metal Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum 'Heavy Metal'

Plant Features:

- Thicker blue leaves.
- 3 to 4 ft. tall.
- Very attractive reddish seed heads.
- Zones 5-9



Dallas Blues Switch Grass



Pennisetum - Fountain Grasses

Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Hameln'



Fountain Grass



Black Fountain Grass
*Pennisetum
alopecuroides*
Moundry



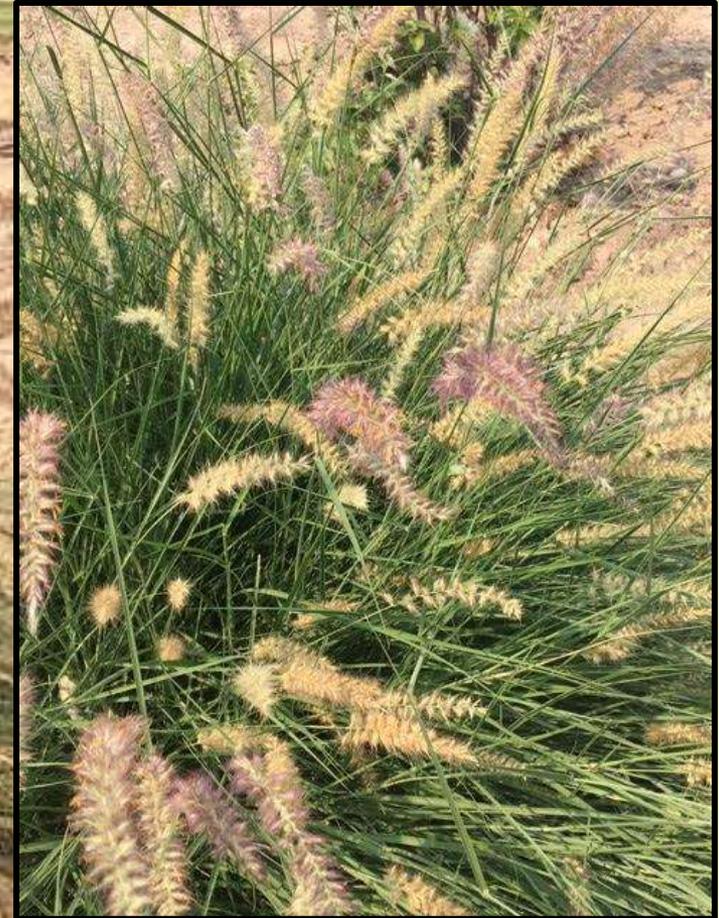




Hameln Fountain
Grass
*Pennisetum
alopecuroides*
Hameln

Karley Rose Fountain Grass

Pennisetum orientale 'Karley Rose'





Blue Oat Grass
*Helictoricon
sempervivens*



Big Blue Stem

Andropogon gerardii



Plant Features:

- Primary grass in the tall grass prairies.
- Blue green to silvery blue.
- Foliage 4 to 7 ft.
- Prefers full sun and well drained soils.
- Zones 4 to 10.

Little Blue Stem

Andropogon scoparius

Plant Features:

- Green to purplish erect clumps.
- 1-4 ft tall
- Hardy to -38°F. and very drought tolerant.
- Nice reddish color in winter.



'The Blues'



Ravenna Grass

Erianthus ravennae

Plant Features:

- Very large grass- 4-5 ft tall with seed heads reaching 8-12 ft.
- Very attractive winter look.
- Seed heads used in dried arrangements
- Zones 5-10





Great Basin Wild Rye

Elymus cinereus

Plant Features:

- Native to great basin area.
- 3-6 ft tall.
- Green to blue green foliage.
- Prefers full sun, tolerates a wide range of conditions (soil, water, etc)





Mexican Feather Grass

Nassella tenuissima







Northern Sea Oats

Chasmanthium latifolium





*Helictotrichon
sempervirens*
Blue Avena Grass



Festuca Idahoensis
'Siskiyou Blue'
Siskiyou Blue Fescue



White House Blue
Festuca

White Cliff
Festuca
Pink Dapple



Siskiyou Blue
Fescue
*Festuca
idahoensis*

Learning Garden Grasses











Learning Garden Fall

































QUESTIONS?

- ▶ Go ahead and plant some grasses to accent your beds, create nice fall structure, and reduce water and maintenance in your landscape.

Thank you for coming

