

Ornamental Grasses in all their Glory

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From "Grasses for a Livable Landscape" by Rick Darke

by Susan Harris

Who can resist ornamental grasses in October? Or even more so in November, December, January and February when there isn't much going on in the garden but we haven't yet removed the dead foliage. And how about this dreamy grass-filled scene from Rick Darke's new book [Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes](#)?

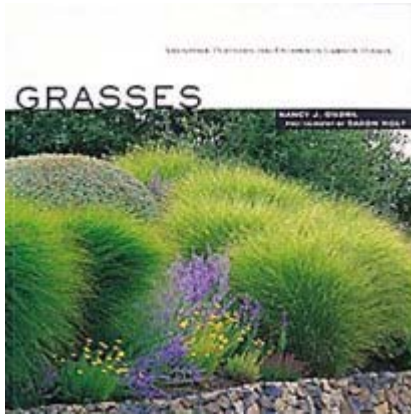
Grasses are also a major player in the landscaping style that debuted in 1987 and has come to be known the [New American Garden](#), made famous by DC-based landscape architects [Oehme van Sweden](#). The style is known for low-maintenance sweeps of grasses, coreopsis, sedums, and black-eyed susans. Rick Darke's naturally a big fan of the New American Garden, describing it as "unharnessed, free, vigorous, vividly blending the natural and the cultivated." He loves the looser look, especially compared to the "European model" that's been dominant in the U.S. for half a century, at least.



Grass border in the Maryland garden of Kurt Bluemel



'Morning Light' Miscanthus blooms late, so it's not invasive like the species.



Another inspiring book on the subject is named simply [Grasses](#); it's by horticulturist Nancy Ondra in Eastern Pennsylvania and her photographer partner, the awesome Saxon Holt.

Top photo by Rick Darke of *Molinia caerulea* subsp *arundinacea* 'Windspiel,' a cultivated variety of purple moor grass. Lower photos by Susan Harris.