

From GardenRant.com; December 4, 2009

Miscanthus sinensis / Chinese Silver Grass



This plant is enjoying huge popularity in American gardens with our increased attention to drought-tolerance and low maintenance generally. And it hasn't hurt that such outstanding designers as Oehme and Van Sweden have used them extensively or that Kurt Bluemel has bred and championed them, along with many other ornamental grasses.

Grasses, especially the larger ones, look best when given enough room, either singly or in groups. They're gorgeous with aster and other late summer and fall bloomers. There are about 20 other species of Miscanthus but this one is the most popular in landscapes.

See [Ornamental Grasses in all their Glory](#) for photos of Kurt Bluemel's awesome border grasses and more from Rick Darke.

Details

- Miscanthus do just fine with poor soil.
- I've always read that Miscanthus (like almost all ornamental grasses) need full sun but NOT so. I find they're fine with bright light and only part sun. At most, they might flower less but we grow them mostly for the foliage, so who cares?
- This species appears on some lists of invasive plants because of the behavior of its early-blooming varieties, which generally aren't available on the market, anyway. [Here's](#) lots more information on the issue.
- The Japanese cultivar 'Morning Light' (pictured) has white margins on its foliage and red flowerheads in fall, and grows to 5 or 6 feet tall. It was named and popularized by Kurt Bluemel and is recommended for the South and MidAtlantic in the Timber Press publication linked to above.

Care

- Yearly maintenance involves just one thing: cutting it back to 6 or so inches from the ground in late winter before the new shoots appear. That's it. Technically, this could be done in the fall but most gardeners enjoy the look of the spent grasses in the winter garden. (It's especially lovely with snow.)
- It's quite drought-tolerant. Though I've read that drought causes them to grow less vigorously, even my neglected ones are plenty vigorous. Bottom line — they won't up and die on you for lack of water.

- Experts advise dividing them every 3-5 years, but I recommend making it 3 before it gets so big you have to call 911 for help getting it out of the ground, much less sawing through it. That's right — you'll be using your toughest and sharpest saw to slice through the amazing root mass. The divisions make excellent gifts because right away they're large, high-impact plants in their new sites.
- Lots more details on this subject are right here: [How to Move or Divide Large Grasses](#).

Good Information in Print

- [Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses](#) by Rick Darke is a *favorite* of ornamental grass-lovers.
- [Grasses for Livable Landscapes](#) is another good one by Darke.
- [The Well Tended Perennial Garden](#) by Tracy DiSabato-Aust is the best-selling book on how to make your perennials healthier and better-looking.
- [Encyclopedia of Perennials](#) by Graham Rice is exhaustive and an outstanding general resource on the subject.
- [The Complete Flower Gardener](#) by Cutler and Ellis is another source I consult regularly.