

Plant Muhly Grass for a unique looking landscape

For the past couple of months, I've written about several different species of native plants that will be offered on January 9th during the Air Potato Exchange Day at the Agriculture Center. The articles have informed you about different flowering plants, vines, bushes, shrubs and trees. One of the plants that hasn't been introduced yet is a type of grass. Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaries*) is a tough native grass that is useful in many different landscapes.

Muhly grass is very adaptable. It grows about 3 to 5 feet tall and about the same in width. It has extreme tolerance to drought and flooding, making it a suitable plant for wetland areas as well as sandy ones. It is virtually maintenance free and can be planted in a variety of ways to enhance the looks of gardens and landscapes.

This grass has a clumping form and a stiff, upright growth. It has a different look than most grasses and produces a delicate, purplish flower, which blooms in the late summer and early fall. These blooms can cover the entire plant, giving it a somewhat iridescent, pinkish-gray hazy appearance that can last up to 8 weeks. After flowering, the ripe seeds give the plant an attractive tan color and the look of the grass changes dramatically.

Muhly Grass is best when planted in masses to fill a large area. It can also be planted along borders. For a more dramatic effect, it can be planted in large, sweeping drifts. This plant is often used to prevent erosion because it stabilizes the soil.

Birds also are attracted to Muhly Grass. They feed on the ripe seeds it produces. It provides excellent cover and shelter for some of nature's smaller creatures.

Plant Muhly Grass in full sun if possible. It is not fussy about soil type and can be planted most anywhere in the yard or garden as long as it has adequate light. Florida's heat and humid weather doesn't bother this tough native one bit and it can be planted in a very dry or very wet area. It's not a picky plant.

It can be propagated by seed or dividing the plant up. As with any newly planted foliage, it needs pampering until it becomes well established. Once Muhly Grass is established, it is basically maintenance free.

Native grasses are becoming more popular with gardeners these days. They generally offer low-maintenance and are environmentally friendly alternative to many other types of ornamental plants. The beautiful blades of these grasses glisten and bend in the breeze and add a mystical effect to landscapes. They also contrast nicely with many other types of plants that can be planted near by. Native grasses come in a vast array of colors and types and can be mixed and matched or just used by themselves.

For a different look in your garden, consider planting Muhly Grass. It will certainly add a wispy look and beautiful color in the late summer months.

For more information on how you can receive your free, native plant, give us a call at the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (863) 402-6545 or visit our website at www.highlandsswcd.org.