

URBAN FARMER

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How to: Include Grasses in Your Garden

While at first thought many may conjure up a garden full of different vegetables, flowers and herbs, various grasses can add an elegance and beauty to your garden, too. With countless types of grasses available to pick from, it's important you do your research to find the best ornamental grasses to include in your garden.

Types of ornamental grasses:

There are several different types of ornamental grasses, and you should study them all before picking which to place in your garden.

Tall ornamental grasses:

These grasses range from six to 10 feet tall, and they make a bold but elegant statement when placed in your yard or garden. Within this type of ornamental grass, there is the Pampas grasses, which thrive in warm climates and tough-to-grow areas. They feature white plumes at the top with blue-gray foliage. Be careful, because this breed of grass can become invasive. Another tall ornamental grass is the Maiden Grass, which is a very popular variety. The Maiden Grass has many different colors you can choose from, and they thrive in both sun and partial shade.

Medium ornamental grasses:

These grasses are four or five feet tall. They are very versatile and allow the option for gardeners to layer different types of grasses and plants to create a specific look in the garden. Since they don't exceed five feet,



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these grasses usually don't require staking to remain upright. Switchgrasses is one of the most popular varieties here, and they have a strong, upright growth pattern. These grasses clump together, and they produce a silvery-red bloom in the late summertime. Switchgrasses love the sun.

Small ornamental grasses:

These grasses only reach one to three feet tall, making them low maintenance and easy to care for. These ornamental grasses are often used to edge a sidewalk or path, or provide even more texture to grasses by being in the front. Sedge grasses fall into this category. Sedges are usually best grown in a moist, shady garden and they can be utilized as an underplanting for an elegant look around taller shrubs or trees.

Caring for ornamental grass:

Although the ornamental grass can bring a



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special, beautiful look to your garden, they do require some care and can't be ignored or they'll grow out of control. Grasses, depending on the variety, can be best for cool or warm season, or evergreen. For warm-season grasses, cut them back in the fall or in mid-spring. These grasses will darken to a brown color when the warm weather is over. When cutting these grasses back, cut them back to just a few inches. When dividing warm-weather grasses, divide them from spring to mid-summer, but not while the grasses are in their flowering phase. Cool-season grasses should be cut back in the very early spring. Since their foliage will look healthy even in some of the colder parts of the winter, don't cut them back until early spring. When cutting these grasses, leave at least one-third of the plant. Divide cool-season grasses in the spring or fall. Only divide evergreens in the spring.



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