



Ornamental Grasses 101

Since the beginning of April it seems to be the season of grasses. It has been the forefront of my perennial season this year. All I have heard is “when”, “where”, “available?”, and “JOSIE!” over the radio. Grasses seem to be in high demand and unfortunately many varieties are low in supply. Grasses are beautiful in the landscape and can be used in so many ways. From just their showy selves to borders, rain gardens, and drought prone areas. Grasses seem to be the leaders in the landscape.

Now may be the perfect opportunity to think outside the old proverbial box and mix it up. Although you may not be able to find the perfect swap, there are so many alternatives when it comes to the height, shape, and color you may find a new favorite. If you break it down, we carry the four major grasses:

- Calamagrostis - tried and true, our upright soldier
- Miscanthus - Basic vase shape
- Pennisetum - mounding, arching, fountain shape
- Panicum - upright

If you come in looking for a ‘Little Bunny’ or a ‘Hameln’, why not consider a fescue? Powdery blue, it can add a bit more texture, pop to your landscape design, and looks great in borders, mass planting, and under those leggy shrubs.

Bigger than a ‘Bunny’ and still thinking ‘Hameln’? How about a step up to an alopecorides? Under a foot of difference in height, Alopec can add a richness of a soft pink to your blooms with the same arching fountain shape.

Good! I have you thinking Alopec! Take it a step further and think Pennisetum ‘Red Head’! Beautiful choice! Same height but beautiful purple buds turning to smoky purple plumes 3” wide to 8-10” long. Stunning!

Stuck on a Panicum ‘Shenandoah’? How about swapping for Panicum ‘Prairie Sky’? Considered the new and improved ‘Shenandoah’, it has same height and shape with extraordinary fall color.

Wanting that upright soldier ‘Karl Foerester’? How about a Panicum ‘Northwind’? Same upright and tight form, ‘Northwind’ offers that blue/green color with stunning vertical accent. Accentuates any landscape.

So even though these are just a few examples of different choices, know that by thinking outside that “box” you can mix and match textures, shapes, and sizes to fit any landscape design.

Be creative, have fun, and don’t be afraid to offer up something different!



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Festuca glauca 'Elijah Blue'