Ornamental Grasses
Suitable for Michigan Gardens

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Short Sweeties … Containers and ground covers 
(less than 3 feet)

- Carex ‘The Beatles’ - Mop head carex
- Carex comans ‘Toffee Twist’ - New Zealand sedge
- Carex morrowii ‘Evergold’ - Sedge
- Festuca ‘Elijah Blue’ - Blue fescue
- Eragrostis ‘Wind Dancer’ - Chinese love grass
- Hakonechloa macra ‘Aureola’, ‘All Gold’ - Variegated Japanese grass
- Imperata ‘Red Baron’ - Blood grass
- Molinia ‘Variegata’ - Variegated moor grass
- Pennisetum ‘Little Bunny’ - Dwarf fountain grass
- Pennisetum ‘Hameln’ - Fountain grass

Medium Beauties … Great for perennial beds 
(3–5 feet)

- Calamagrostis xacutifolia ‘Karl Foerster’ - Feather reed grass
- Calamagrostis brachytricha ‘El Dorado’ - Fall–blooming reed grass
- Chasmanthium latifolium - Northern sea oats
- Deschampsia cespitosa - Tufted hair grass
- Helichtotrichon sempervirens - Blue oats grass
- Miscanthus purpurascens ‘Graziella’ - Flame grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Gold Bar’ - Japanese silver grass
- Pennisetum orientale ‘Karley Rose’ - Switch grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Hanse Herms’ - Switch grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Cloud Nine’ - Giant reed grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Dallas Blues’ - Giant silver grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Northwind’ - Giant silver grass

HUMONGOUS Grasses… To impress your friends 
(> 10 feet)

- Arundo donax variegatus - Variegated giant reed grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Cabaret’ - Japanese silver grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Gracillimus’ - Variegated giant reed grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Malapartus’ - Japanese silver grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Sarabande’ - Japanese silver grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Silberfeder’ - Japanese silver grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Strictus’ - Japanese silver grass
- Miscanthus sinensis ‘Variegatus’ - Japanese silver grass
- Molinia litoralis ‘Skyracer’ - Tall purple moor grass
- Molinia litoralis ‘Windspeil’ - Tall purple moor grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Cloud Nine’ - Switch grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Dallas Blues’ - Switch grass
- Panicum virgatum ‘Northwind’ - Switch grass

Tender perennials …
Plant again each year – but many are worth it!!

- Carex buchananii - Leather leaf sedge
- Nasella tenuisima - Mexican feather grass
- Pennisetum xadvena - Fountain grass
- Pennisetum xadvena ‘Rubrum’ - Purple fountain grass
- Pennisetum sp. - Purple millet
- Rhynchochlytrum nerviglume a.k.a. Melinus nerviglumis - Ruby grass
- Saccharum officinalis - Sugar cane
Best native grasses ... for the wild spot

- *Andropogon gerardii* Big bluestem
- *Bouteloua sp.* Side oats gramma
- *Carex muskingumensis* esp Little Midge
- *Eragrostis spectabilis* Palm sedge
- *Koeleria macrantha* June grass
- *Luzula multiflora* Woodrush
- *Panicum virgatum* Little bluestem
- *Schizachyrium scoparium* Indian grass
- *Sporobolus heterolepis* Prairie Drop Seed

Tough as Nails ... for cold and dry – Zone 4 hardy

- *Calamagrostis ‘Karl Foerster’*
- *Miscanthus giganteus*
- *Miscanthus ‘Morning Light’*
- *Miscanthus ‘Silberfeder’*
- *Miscanthus ‘Strictus’*
- *Molinia ‘Skyracer’*
- *Panicum ‘Heavy Metal’, ‘Cloud Nine’*
- *Sorghastrum nutans* – Indian grass

Shade tolerant ...

- *Carex (Sedges) – many American species*
- *Chasmanthium latifolium*
- *Hakonochloa macra ‘All Gold’ is a great cultivar*
- *Luzula sylvesteris*

Herbaceous Perennial Picks

These work great with grasses in mid–Michigan. Most require minimum care and are drought tolerant.

- *Achillea ‘Fireland’, ‘Anthea’, ‘Moonshine’ – Yarrow*
- *Amsonia hubrichtii – Threadleaf Blue Star*
- *Amsonia tabernaemontana – Blue Star*
- *Artemesia ludoviciana ‘Valerie Finnis’*
- *Buddleia globosa ‘Nanho Blue’ – Butterfly Bush*
- *Coreopsis verticillata ‘Flying Saucers’*
- *Echinacea purpurea – numerous cultivars – Purple Cone Flower*
- *Eupatorium ‘Gateway’ and ‘Little Joe’ – Joe–Pye Weed*
- *Gaura lindheimeri ‘Whirling Butterfly’ and others*
- *Geranium ‘Rozanne’*
- *Helianthus salicifolius – Willow–Leaved Sunflower*
- *Nepeta faassenii ‘Six Hills Giant’, ‘Walker’s Low’ – Catmint*
- *Oenothera fruticosa – Sundrop/Evening Primrose*
- *Perovskia atriplicifolia – Russian Sage*
- *Ratibida pinnata – Yellow conflower*
- *Rudbeckia fulgida ‘Goldsturm’ – Black Eyed Susan*
- *Silphium perfoliatum Cup plant*
- *Vernonia missourica Ironweed*

Sources of Ornamental Grasses

Sometimes finding specific new (and old) cultivars may be a challenge:

Several Michigan Nurseries produce ornamental grasses including Walter’s Gardens, HorTech, and Amber Waves.

**Tip:** Mail–order using the web is an option for unique plants. Using a search engine, enter the species and cultivar name.

Some Suggested Reading


Very well done – a standby in my book collection for design ideas.


Outstanding photos and descriptions. Great for browsing when you are daydreaming about combinations.


Excellent reading with more than enough information and design ideas to keep you busy for years.