# Ornamental Grasses

## Suitable for Michigan Gardens

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

- **Carex** 'The Beatles'
- **Carex comans** ‘Toffee Twist’
- **Carex morrowii** ‘Evergold’
- **Festuca** ‘Elijah Blue’
- **Eragrostis** ‘Wind Dancer’
- **Hakonechloa macra** ‘Aureola’, ‘All Gold’
- **Imperata** ‘Red Baron’
- **Molinia** ‘Variegata’
- **Pennisetum** ‘Little Bunny’
- **Pennisetum** ‘Hameln’

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

- **Calamagrostis x acutifolia** ‘Karl Foerster’
- **Calamagrostis brachytricha** ‘El Dorado’
- **Chasmanthium latifolium**
- **Deschampsia cespitosa**
- **Helichtotrichon sempervirens**
- **Miscanthus purpurascens**
- **Miscanthus sinensis** ‘Graziella’, ‘Gold Bar’, ‘Morning Light’, ‘Rigoletto’
- **Panicum virgatum** ‘Hanse Herms’, ‘Heavy Metal’, ‘Rotstrahlbusch’, ‘Shenandoah’
- **Pennisetum orientale** ‘Karley Rose’
- **Schizachyrium scoparium**
- **Sporobolus heterolepis**

### Large Grasses ... For masses, screens and specimens (5–10 feet)

- **Arundo donax variegatus** Variegated giant reed grass
- **Miscanthus sinensis** ‘Cabaret’
- **Molinia litoralis** ‘Skyracer’
- **Panicum virgatum** ‘Cloud Nine’, ‘Dallas Blues’, ‘Northwind’

### HUMONGOUS Grasses... To impress your friends (>10 feet)

- **Arundo donax** Giant reed grass
- **Miscanthus giganteus** aka **Miscanthus floridulus** Giant silver grass
- **Saccharum ravennae** Ravenna grass

### Tender perennials ...

- Plant again each year – but many are worth it!!
  - **Carex buchananii** Leather leaf sedge
  - **Nasella tenuisima** Mexican feather grass
  - **Pennisetum advena** Fountain grass
  - **Pennisetum advena ‘Rubrum’** Purple fountain grass
  - **Pennisetum sp.** Purple millet
  - **Rhynchelytrum 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 Purple love grass
Koeleria macrantha June grass
Luzula multiflora Woodrush
Panicum virgatum Switch grass
Schizachyrium scoparium Little bluestem
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’
Sorgastrum nutans – Indian grass

Shade tolerant ...

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

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.

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 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

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.