



Ornamental grasses are beneficial in the landscape

When we hear the term landscape, we often picture lush flowerbeds full of brightly colored flowers. However, using ornamental grasses and grass-like plants can be a great benefit to any landscape.

Ornamental grasses are more than true grasses – they also include close relatives such as sedges, rushes, hardy bamboos and others. Ornamental grasses and grass-like plants can add a great deal of texture and visual interest to the landscape.

There are several reasons why ornamental grasses are a great choice for your landscape. For those who don't have the greatest soil, grasses are adaptable and can grow in poorer soils better than any other garden plants.

In addition, grasses are relatively easy to grow, which is great for the novice gardener. Seasoned gardeners know how much work gardening can be, so you'll be happy to hear grasses require little effort to maintain once they're established. Plus, grasses don't have very many pest problems.

They have unique form and texture compared to many other landscape plants and provide year-round visual interest. In addition to the form, texture, and colors that many species offer, they also provide movement as they sway back and forth in the gentlest of breezes. We all know Oklahoma almost always has a breeze.

When selecting grasses, consider their function in the landscape. Will the grasses be used as groundcover, erosion control, accent, to attract wildlife, as a screen or even a lawn substitute? Oklahoma's unique climate and ecoregions provide many different opportunities and choices when it comes to grasses and their grass-like relatives.

Ornamental grasses can be planted just about any time of year, particularly containerized specimens; however, for establishment purposes cool-season grasses are best planted in the late summer and fall and warm-season grasses in late spring and early summer. Supplemental watering may be necessary the first season after planting.

If using several different varieties of grasses, be sure to group together those with the same watering requirements. Some require very little water once established, while others may need a bit more. Most really don't need much water at all except in the cases of extreme drought. Overwatering can lead to weak stems resulting in the grasses flopping over. The same can happen if overfertilized, too.

Grasses also offer more bang for the buck in that they're easily propagated through division. Some cultivars can only be propagated by division due to the fact they produce sterile seed. Seed propagation is often used with native grasses for prairie restoration or for planting large areas.

As garden activities ramp up over the next few weeks, consider adding some ornamental grasses to spice things up a little.

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