Wild Sugarcane

Saccharum spontaneum



Wild Sugarcane
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 10 feet

Flower Height: 15 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 5

Other Names: Kans Grass, Sugar Cane

Description:

This variety creates a massive clump of gracefully arching, gray-green leaves; silver-gray plumes rise later in the season and persist through winter; considered to be an invasive noxious weed in many areas

Ornamental Features

Wild Sugarcane has masses of beautiful plumes of silver flowers rising above the foliage from early to mid fall, which are most effective when planted in groupings. The flowers are excellent for cutting. The tan seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from mid fall to late winter. Its grassy leaves remain grayish green in color with showy burgundy variegation throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Wild Sugarcane is an herbaceous perennial grass with a shapely form and gracefully arching stems. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other garden plants with finer foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering
- Invasive
- Self-Seeding

Wild Sugarcane is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Wild Sugarcane will grow to be about 10 feet tall at maturity extending to 15 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 10 feet. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America.

Wild Sugarcane is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.