Fontaine Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum 'Fontaine'



Fontaine Switch Grass in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 24 inches

Spread: 18 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3

Description:

This attractive selection forms an upright clump of bright green leaves that turn gold in fall; airy heads of greenish-yellow flowers appear on fountain-like plumes in summer, then mature to gold; perfect as a garden accent, or massed in borders

Ornamental Features

Fontaine Switch Grass features airy plumes of yellow flowers with light green overtones rising above the foliage from mid to late summer. Its attractive grassy leaves are forest green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of gold and in the fall. The gold seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to mid winter.

Landscape Attributes

Fontaine Switch Grass is an herbaceous perennial grass with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cut back to the ground in late winter before active growth resumes. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Fontaine Switch Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

Fontaine Switch Grass will grow to be about 24 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 18 inches. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 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 is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under typical garden conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for alkaline soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.