Red Sunset Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum 'Red Sunset'



Red Sunset Switch Grass foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Description:

This tall selection forms an upright clump of blue-green leaves turning to wine-red by early summer; airy heads of tiny rosy-red flowers appear on plumes in mid to late summer; perfect as an accent or massed in borders; drought tolerant once established

Ornamental Features

Red Sunset Switch Grass features airy plumes of rose flowers with red overtones rising above the foliage in mid summer. Its attractive grassy leaves emerge bluish-green in spring, turning dark red in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous red in the fall. The brown seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to mid fall. The tan stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Red Sunset 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.

Red Sunset Switch Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

Red Sunset Switch Grass will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. 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. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. 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.