Sweet Grass

Hierochloe odorata

Height: 18 inches

Spread: 30 inches

Spacing: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3

Other Names: Sweetgrass, Vanilla Grass, Manna Grass

Description:

An erect, slender, sweet smelling aromatic grass, producing small seed heads bearing broad, copper colored spikelets; it is considered a sacred herb by indigenous peoples in North America; extremely hardy, and will cover an area by spreading rhizomes



Sweet Grass flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Sweet Grass features airy panicles of lightly-scented creamy white flowers with buttery yellow overtones held atop the stems from mid spring to early summer. The coppery-bronze fruits are held in abundance in spectacular clusters from mid summer to mid fall. Its fragrant grassy leaves are grayish green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of yellow and in the fall.



Sweet Grass foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Sweet Grass is a dense herbaceous perennial grass with a ground-hugging 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 cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering
- Self-Seeding

Sweet Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Herb Gardens
- Container Planting
- Bog Gardens

Planting & Growing

Sweet Grass will grow to be about 16 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 30 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 24 inches apart. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 5 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 quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone over the growing season to conserve soil moisture. This species is native to parts of North America..

Sweet Grass is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its spreading habit of growth, it is ideally suited for use as a 'spiller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the edges where it can spill gracefully over the pot. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.