

## Ornamental Grasses

Ornamental grasses are as close to maintenance free as a plant can get. Whether planted in large groupings, hedges or tossed into the landscape for texture and color, they make great focal points as well as accents.

Most ornamental grasses prefer at least 6 hours of sun a day, but some are flexible and will get by on just a bit less. Medium growing grasses like the Hameln can be spaced about 2 feet apart. Smaller growers such as the Little Bunny, Little Honey, Blue Glow, Elijah Blue, Acorus Ogon, Pennsylvanica Sedge and Little Blue Stem can be planted much closer, even 8 or so inches apart. They will need just enough room to spread their wings a bit. The taller varieties (in the 3' and up range) can be planted anywhere from 2.5 feet to 3 feet apart.

### **Planting:**

Plant them in holes that are as deep as their original container. Add aged manure or compost at planting and put down a thick layer of mulch in fall. The first few weeks are critical with grasses. Check them daily for several weeks. If the soil at the base of the clumps is dry, water them. One long dry day can cause them to die at this stage. Depending on the environment/weather, they may need to be watered daily or every other day during this time. Each situation will be different, so you will need to use your own judgment on this. Once they are established, at about a month, then water weekly throughout the first growing season. After one year, they require little watering.

### **Care:**

If applying aged manure or compost, fertilizing isn't necessary for ornamental grasses. They are generally happy without fertilizing. In fact, too much nitrogen in the soil can lead to problems with them. If you must, in spring apply a slow release of 3-1-2 ratio once.

Ornamental grasses provide lots of texture and interest during the fall and winter and the birds often eat the seeds from the plumes. In late winter, usually February-March, they can be pruned back to a few inches above the ground by using shears or a weed eater. As they age, they may become thinner. At this time, they can be dug up and divided, then replanted or tossed away.

### **Tips:**

Ornamental grasses, like lawn grasses, are divided into 2 categories: **Warm Season and Cool Season**. We have our varieties divided into the appropriate categories on our website.

**Cool season** grasses will produce their growth during spring when the temperatures are cool and there is more moisture. In summer, when the temperatures heat up, their growth will slow and they may even turn brown if not watered regularly. The latter part of summer/early fall when the temperatures begin to fall again, they will perk up and resume growth. They prefer temperatures in the 40's to 70's.

**Warm season** grasses begin to put on new growth in late spring/early summer when the temperatures are consistently in the 70's and up with their blooms coming on in late summer/early fall. You may consider surrounding the warm season grasses with early/mid spring flowers.