Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 2b



Switch Grass
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Switch Grass foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Switch Grass features airy plumes of rose flowers rising above the foliage in mid summer. The brick red seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to mid fall. Its grassy leaves are green in colour. The foliage often turns yellow in fall.

Landscape Attributes

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.

Switch Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

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. 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 species is native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.