



in the photo: Gulf Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) displays stunning pink color in the fall. You don't have to worry about this grass becoming invasive. Most of the *Muhlenbergia* species are clumping grasses.

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

By Mary Lew Quesinberry

Native Ornamental Grasses

Stipa tenuissima, (Mexican Feather grass or also called Mexican wiregrass) is a beautiful addition for your garden. Native to Mexico, it is the softest of the ornamental grasses and starts out silky green in color and develops a golden bloom in May, which dries out to a buff color. It grows 18 to 36 inches in height. In the winter it turns totally blonde and never stops adding year round interest. Mexican Feather grass requires excellent drainage, and that is a tough requirement to fulfill living in central Texas with our heavy clay soil. Place it in an elevated spot and use a mix of soil, compost and decomposed granite. It loves hot, sunny conditions and does

well with some shade also. It is a standout as an accent plant or in a grouping. I use it in both situations. It is drought tolerant, loves alkaline soil and has a graceful, flowing motion. It is an ornamental grass that will add movement and beauty to a hot, sunny spot year round.

Bamboo Muhly (*Muhlenbergia dumosa*) is a good selection for an ornamental grass in a shady situation. If you have a garden with an Asian theme, this is the grass to use.

Use Gulf Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) as a selection for fall color. The beautiful feathery pink seed heads glow in the sunlight.

A very tidy ornamental grass is the Deer Muhly (*Muhlenbergia rigens*). It maintains a round shape and stays about 1 1/2 feet in height.

Any of these grasses would be graceful additions to your garden. They are easy to care for and they will add motion and texture to your landscaping. These grasses can be found at a nursery selling native plants. To learn more about native grasses visit aggie-horticulture, tamu.edu. If you have a question for a master gardener send it to ask.bcmga@gmail.com.