

UF/IFAS EXTENSION FACTSHEET GROWING BAMBOO

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Black bamboo.



Blue bamboo (*Bambusa chungii*).



Buddha belly bamboo.

Photos by: Tia Silvasy, UF/IFAS

In Florida, we have temperate to tropical climates that allow us to grow many species of bamboo. There are 1,400 of bamboo species in 115 genera worldwide. We also have a Florida native bamboo species, called switchcane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) which naturally grow along the rivers throughout Florida.

Clumping Vs Running Bamboo

Will the bamboo will take over the yard? Running bamboo spreads rapidly by underground runners. Running bamboo is not recommended for planting in Florida in home landscapes, some running bamboo are listed as high risk of invasion. Clumping bamboo will grow and produce new shoots but won't travel far.

Types of Bamboo: Choosing a Clumping Bamboo Variety Green Bamboo

The most popular bamboo in Florida for residential properties is 'Graceful' (*Bambusa textilis var. gracilis*) because it has a relatively short height to 25' and grows upright with a dark green color. Another favorite is the giant timber bamboo (*Bambusa oldhamii*), which has the largest culms (stems) to 3 - 4". Other popular varieties that are commercially available from local bamboo nurseries include 'Fernleaf' (*Bambusa multiplex*), 'Seabreeze' (*Bambusa malingensis*), and Buddha Belly (*Bambusa vulgaris* 'Wamin'). Green bamboos grow easily and are somewhat cold hardy.

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Black Bamboo

Black bamboos have a striking look but are less popular because they are more sensitive to cold and grow slower (making them more expensive). Black bamboos that grow well in Central or South Florida include Timor Black (*Bambusa lako*), Java Black (*Gigantocloa atrovioleacea*) and the Black Asper (*Dendrocalamus asper* 'Bering Hitam'), which is the largest of the black bamboos and can grow in USDA zone 9b or 10.

Blue Bamboo

Blue bamboos are called so because of the white powder on the young canes, which give them a pretty blueish color. Popular varieties include Tropical Blue (*Bambusa chungii*) and Angel Mist (*Dendrocalamus minor* var. *amoenus*).

Bamboo Uses

In the landscape, bamboo makes a great privacy barrier, it's also used as a wind break and can reduce unpleasant noises with the soothing sound of its rustling leaves. It can be used as a specimen plant, living fence, or hedge if pruned. Bamboo is available in a variety of sizes, colors and textures for that tropical look. Some have edible shoots, and the leaves can be used to make bamboo tea.

Bamboo Propagation

Bamboo can be propagated by division of the roots, stem cuttings or air layering. Propagation success varies by bamboo species and age of material used.



Propagation of bamboo by division.

Photos by: Tia Silvasy, UF/IFAS

Bamboo Maintenance

Bamboo can grow up to 70' tall depending on the species. In all cases, it is good to remove any dead stems and cut them to ground level. Depending on your goal, you may want to top the bamboo and cut it to a certain height or hedge the bamboo to consistently trim it to the same height or shape. Bamboo likes regular watering and mulch. It's also a great self-mulcher, dropping many leaves you can leave in place. Apply a slow-release fertilizer, low in phosphorus with near equal parts of nitrogen and potassium such as a 18-6-12 twice per year.

Removing Bamboo

Once established, bamboo can be difficult to remove or eradicate. Since it is basically a large grass, it doesn't mind mowing. The first step is to cut the clump down, a Sawzall works good for this. To mechanically remove the bamboo, use a backhoe, a stump grinder, or dig it up. Glyphosate and imazapyr are both herbicides that can be used to kill bamboo. Imazapyr has residual soil activity so do not use if you have edibles in your landscape.

Resources

UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions on Clumping Bamboo

gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/clumping-bamboo

EDIS publication on Bamboo Control

edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/AG266



'Hawaiian Gold' bamboo has bright yellow culms green stripes.

Have plant questions?

Call or email our Help Desk at

hillsmg@mail.ufl.edu or 813-744-5519.

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