



An Equal Opportunity Institution



# Garden Scoop

## ORNAMENTAL GRASS

BY K.S.Kennen, MGV

Ornamental grass can be defined as any grass or grass-like plant that is used in landscaping. True grass in the *Poaceae* family has a hollow stem with leaves that grow from the base of that stem. A Florida native, often used in landscapes, is muhly grass or *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. This clumping grass is very noticeable in the fall when its pink bloom appears. It can often be seen in city landscapes edging walkways. A non-native grass, also noticeable for its copper or purple-pink plumes, is fountain grass or *Pennisetum setaceum*. This ornamental grass can easily be used as an accent in a landscape not only because of its color but size of four feet.

Besides the grasses in the *Poaceae* family, there are plants that are like grasses and can be used in a landscape. They are rushes, sedges, sweetflags, and horsetails. Rushes or *Juncus* grow in wet areas but are often potted and used as accent plants. The distinctive characteristic of these plants is that they only have stems. Sedges, *Cyperaceae*, are perfect for shade and can be used in beds, borders, or as ground cover. This plant has leaves that grow in a spiral around the stems. Sweetflag, *Acoraceae*, is a mounding grass that does well in part shade and can make a perfect ground cover. It is recognizable because it has a triangular stem. Finally, there is horsetail, *Equisetum*, that has the look of small bamboo stalks with its segmented growth. Unlike all those prior grasses mentioned, this ornamental is not clumping but creeping and can spread.

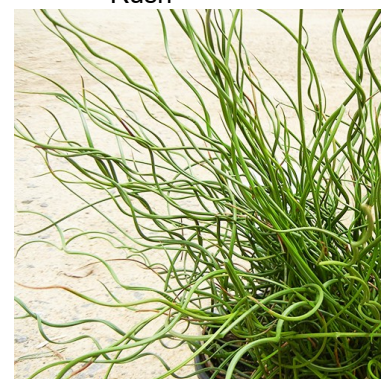
Muhly grass



Fountain grass



Rush



Sweetflag



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### Lake County MGV Mission Statement

The mission of UF/IFAS Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers is to assist extension agents by providing horticultural education programs and current research-based information to the public through plant clinics, community outreach and Discovery Gardens.



<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/ornamental-grasses.html>

For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office [lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu](mailto:lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu) ▪

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*The Foundation for The Gator Nation*

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# Ornamental Grass

By R. Doherty

I'll admit it. I'm not fond of ornamental grasses. I dug all of them up from my yard when I moved into my home six years ago. They were too much of a bear to maintain because they were so overgrown, ungainly, and intertwined with themselves and other plants. Nothing could be done in those areas. They were everywhere and I just didn't like the overgrown look. Turns out one of them was *Liriope spicata* – a very invasive species!

Now, I'm rethinking their purpose because I recently learned the "Right Place" for them in the landscape. So, I'm going to share what I've learned with you.

- Ornamental grasses HELP with erosion.
- Clumping or bunching type of grass is best for erosion.
- Make sure plants don't outgrow their location. They love the sun, so they WILL GROW!!
- Plant densely to discourage weeds.
- If you group the grass types together, it is easier to ID weeds.
- Sloping landscapes need tough, deep-rooted, ornamental grasses inter-planted with drought-resistant bushes and ground covers to stop erosion.
- Living shorelines planted with grasses fulfill principle 9, protect the waterfront, of FFL.

Be sure to cut back tall grasses in late winter or early spring before new growth begins. This is also a good time to divide plants while they are dormant.



**Bamboo Muhly** -  
*Muhlenbergia dumosa*  
4-6 feet tall and 5 feet wide  
Full sun or part shade  
Fall and winter bloom, bright green or straw-colored  
Clumping, fine textured, and heat tolerant



**Fakahatchee Grass**  
*-Tripsacum dactyloides*  
4-6 feet tall and wide  
Part sun or part shade  
Red or yellow summer or spring blooms  
Dwarf size too, *Tripsacum floridanum*



**Lemongrass**  
*- Cymbopogon citratus*  
4-6 feet tall  
Part sun and part shade  
Rarely flowers  
Edible with mild lemon taste



**Lovegrass**  
*Eragrostis spectabilis*  
Full sun or part shade  
Florida native  
Purple or straw colored bloom



**Flax Lily**  
*Dianella caerulea*  
Grass like, 2 feet tall  
Full sun, part shade  
Small, light-blue flowers  
Prominent yellow stamens  
Winter through spring



**Aztec grass**  
*Ophiopogon jaburan*  
Grass-like, 1-2 feet tall  
Full sun  
Small, black fruit after white bloom



# Book Review: *Garden Renovation*

By: R. Doherty

Suggested reading for landscape design by National Garden Clubs is *Garden Renovation* by Bobbie Schwartz. This book is full of ideas on how to renovate existing softscapes (e.g. gardens/yards) and hardscapes (e.g. patios/sidewalks). The ideas are backed with gorgeous color photos. So, there's no need for imagination since the examples are right there with the text. Before going into my recap/review, I wanted to mention that not all the links in the "Resources" section are still valid. However, the titles they refer to are, so you can search for them by title in your internet browser.

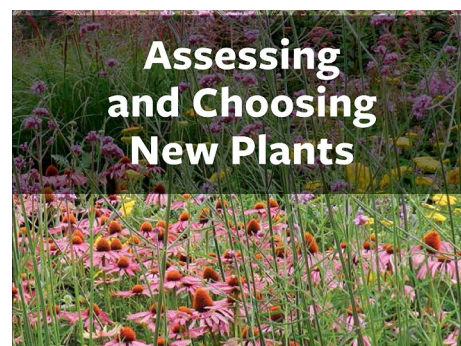


I often look at my yard and imagine how I can make it look more beautiful, attract certain pollinators, make it even more Florida friendly, or just easier for me to renovate. This book was not only inspirational in carrying out my thoughts, but gave insightful advice and great photographic examples.

I appreciated the way the book was broken up into sections: "Landscape Renovation", "Landscape Essentials", "Outside Lighting", "Maintenance", "Themes", "Hardscapes", "Establishing Outdoor Rooms", "Features", and "Enhancements". It helped my thought process flow in an orderly manner.

*Landscape Renovation* helps you decide if you should renovate and work with your existing landscape to make it more appealing. The "Landscape Essentials" chapter explains how to assess your landscape's current conditions: soil pH, light, drainage, microclimates, etc. It's important to know what you're working with so you can choose the "Right Plants for the Right Places" in your yard.

The chapters on "Outside Lighting" and "Maintenance" make sure you are up to code and understand what it takes to keep your landscape and hardscape in good form. The rest of the chapters give examples about incorporating other features to enhance your landscape. The photos are great and there are even design drawings to help you get started.



# Plant Clinic Clatter

By R. Doherty, MGV

## DEAR MASTER GARDENER:

I've recently been told that ornamental grasses can help with erosion and are good to use near shorelines and in swales. Can you tell me which ones are best and easiest to maintain?

## DEAR HOMEOWNER:

As a matter of fact, the September *Garden Scoop* issue is about this topic! The thing to keep in mind when purchasing ornamental grass is to find the clumping or bunching kind instead of those that creep or run. The reason behind this is that the clumping kind are much easier to maintain and keep where you want them.

Ornamental grasses, grown in full sun and a well-drained area, are drought tolerant and heat resistant. They come in many sizes and colors, along with varied seasonal blooms. See the other articles in this issue for more information.



## DEAR MASTER GARDENER:

My neighbor has this beautiful grass in his yard that is tall and has pink plumes on top that fade to white. I have attached a picture for you to identify so I can plant some in my yard.



## DEAR HOMEOWNER:

I am so glad you asked about this grass. It is commonly called pampas grass and has a Latin name of *Cortaderia selloana*. It is native to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. It was brought to the United States in 1848 by Joseph Sexton, a California nurseryman. It is not recommended to be planted anymore because it is now classified as INVASIVE. The blades of the plant have razor sharp edges and are harmful to wildlife attempting to shelter in the grass. Also, it has millions of seeds in one plant and will spread.

If you want to have that wispy look of pink in your garden, try planting muhly grass. It does not grow as tall as pampas grass but has beautiful pink blooms and is a native, Florida grass.

## DEAR MASTER GARDENER:

My neighbor has this grass in his garden that looks like it needs more fertilizer because it has pale green or white stripes on the grass blades. How can he fix this?

## DEAR HOMEOWNER:

From your basic description I am guessing that your neighbor has what is commonly called zebra grass. This cultivar grass has strips of white across the foliage. Leaves droop toward the ground. It grows from 5 to 7 feet tall in clumps and has pink flowers in the fall that can last throughout the winter. Don't worry. If this is zebra grass, it is healthy and like most ornamental grasses, does not need fertilizer.



# Tremendous: Palms of Florida

BY: J. Daughtery, RHA

Palms are often associated with Florida, though many are not native to the state. Do you know which ones are native and which are invasive? In order for a plant to be listed as invasive it must meet 3 requirements: 1. It must be a non-native. 2. It must be introduced by humans either accidentally or on purpose. 3. It can or does cause environmental or economic harm.

Native plants help our ecosystems in countless ways. Unfortunately, many of our native palms are endangered. To be classified as endangered the plants must be native to the state, with an unlikely, long, term survival rate if the cause of the population decline continues. Plants that are likely to become endangered are listed as threatened. Following are plant profiles for native and invasive palms.

## Native

### Saw Cabbage (*Acoelorrhaphe wrightii*)

This state threatened palm exhibits a clustered trunk habit with fan-shaped leaves. Trunks are between two and three inches and reach heights from 20-40 feet tall. Clusters can be 15-20 feet wide. The cream-colored flower groups of this palm are great for pollinators. Plant in zones 9B-11 in moist soils.

### Silver Palm, (*Coccothrinax argentata*)

Another state threatened palm, this plant reaches heights for 35 feet tall with a 10-foot spread. Characterized by blue green leaves with silver undersides, this plant does best in zones 10-11 with marginal success in zone 9B. The white flowers and small, purple fruits are attractive to wildlife.

### Key Palm (*Leucothrinax morrisii*)

The first endangered plant on this list grows in zones 10B-11. Ranging from 20-35 feet tall with an 8-12 foot spread. Blooms are white or yellow.

### Buccaneer Palm (*Pseudophoenix sargentii*)

This endangered palm can grow in zones 9B-11 with marginal success in zone 9A. It grows between 20-40 feet tall with a 12 foot spread. Flowers are a subtle yellow.

### Florida Royal Palm (*Roystonea regia*)

While beautiful, sadly, this royal plant is endangered. A large specimen with heights from 80-100 feet and 20-25 feet wide, not every location is suitable for it. If you have space for this tall palm, it does best in zones 10-11 with marginal success in zone 9B.

### Cabbage Palm, Sabal Palm (*Sabal palmetto*)

The state 'tree' is not actually a tree but a palm. Growing up to 40 feet high, the trunk can be 10-15 inches in diameter. Plant in the southern part of our state and as far north as zone 8B.

### Saw Palmetto (*Sereoa repens*)

This palm is much smaller, resembling a shrub more than a tree. It grows from 5-10 feet tall and 4-10 feet wide. You can grow this in zones 8-11. The fruit is edible as well and harvested as it ripens from August through October.

### Florida Thatch Palm (*Thrinax radiata*)

This is another endangered palm. It grows between 30 and 50 feet tall with a spread of 8 to 12 feet in zones 10B-11.

# Florida Palms: Invasive

## Washington Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*)

Native to Baja, California, and Mexico, this palm grows between 70 and 100 feet in zones 9B-11. Common in urban plantings, an alternative, native option is the Florida royal palm.

## Queen Palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*)

This palm is native to Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It grows from 45 to 90 feet tall in zones 9B-11. Native alternatives include Florida royal palm and buccaneer palm depending on how tall you want the palm to become in your location.

## Alexander Palm (*Ptychosperma elegans*)

This palm is native to Australia with a height and width from 20-40 feet. There are several native palm options. Native options for zones 10B -11 include Florida thatch palm, buccaneer palm, key palm, and silver palm.

## Senegal Date Palm (*Phoenix reclinata* Jacquin)

Native to tropical areas of Africa and Madagascar, this palm grows in zones 10-11 and reaches heights of 40-60 feet and spreads of 30-45 feet. Native alternatives include Florida thatch palm, buccaneer palm, key palm, and silver palm.

## Chinese Fan Palm (*Livistona Chinesis*)

Native to Japan, Taiwan, and southern China, this plant grows between 40-50 ft with a spread of 15-19 feet. Native alternatives for zones 9-11 include saw cabbage, buccaneer palm, and cabbage palm.

## Coconut Palm (*Cocos nucifera*)

This may surprise you, but this plant is native to Malay Archipelago and the South Pacific, not Florida. It reaches heights for 80-100 feet in zone 10. Florida royal palm is the native alternative for a similar look and height.

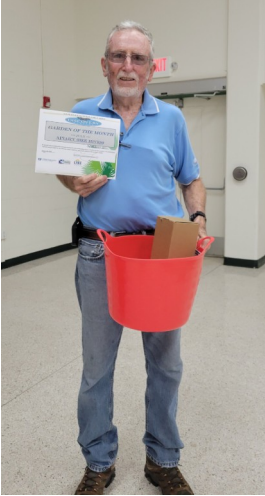
### Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insect, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for advice Monday and Wednesday 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The plant clinic is staffed by volunteers. Please call ahead at 352-343-4101 to be sure that someone is in the clinic to assist you with your question.

You may also send photos of your local problems to Jamielyn Daugherty at [jdaugherty@ufl.edu](mailto:jdaugherty@ufl.edu) or to the plant clinic at [lakemg@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:lakemg@ifas.ufl.edu).



# GARDEN OF THE MONTH: APIARY



Congratulations to Giles Pajet-Wilkes, lead and caretaker of our bees. He has been busy keeping the bees fed during these hot months because there are shortages of natural nectar in the gardens and nearby orchard. This “garden” has seven hives of honeybees. Honeybees are all over the United States and pollinate over 100 types of crops.

Sometimes the excess honey is harvested and sold at our plant sale or other events. Hopefully, there will be some this year.

**Fall Tours!**

**DISCOVERY GARDENS**

**NEW GARDEN TOURS!**

We are pleased to announce new Educational Tours in the Discovery Garden. Audio and signage tours are self paced. With these new tours, we are conducting a research study that tour participants are encouraged to take part in. Bring your phone to scan the QR code to listen to the audio tour!

**RESEARCH INFORMATION**

The research study aims to look at the educational effectiveness of these tours. Participation in the pre- and post-tour surveys is voluntary. There is no compensation for your participation. Personal information collected is kept confidential. Participants will receive a six-month and one-year post survey.

**DATES/TIMES**

**September**  
Fri 8th 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Thu 14th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour  
Sat 16th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour  
Wed 20th 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour

**October**  
Wed 4th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour  
Mon 9th 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Fri 20th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour  
Sat 21st 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Wed 25th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour

**November**  
Tues 2nd 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Mon 6th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour  
Mon 13th 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Tues 21st 1-3:30pm: Audio Tour  
Mon 27th 1-3:30pm: Signage Tour

**Contact the Lead Researcher**  
Jamie Daugherty  
Residential Horticulture Agent  
jdaugherty@ufl.edu  
352-343-4101 x2722

**Discovery Gardens Hours**  
M-F 8am-4pm  
Third Saturday of the month 8am-4pm  
1951 Woodlea Road  
Tavares, FL, 32778

**UF IFAS Extension**  
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# Events

## Saturday In the Garden

September 16, 2023, 10am -1pm Lake County Extension Office, 1951 Woodlea Rd., Tavares  
Plant Propagation For Beginners.  
Learn how to multiply the number of plants you have by propagation.

## LIBRARY CLASSES

September 10, 2023, 2 – 3 pm  
Florida Fruit Trees Free and no registration  
Mt. Dora Public Library  
In Florida we are fortunate to have a climate that allows us to grow many interesting plants. Fruit trees are a popular option for many. Learn more about options to grow in Central Florida and how to care for these trees.

September 19, 2023, 12 – 1 pm  
Succulents Free and no registration  
Eustis Public Library  
Succulents require minimal care and come in many shapes and sizes. Learn more about these fascinating plants and how to add them to your plant collection.

September 21, 2023, 5 – 6 pm  
Container Gardening Free and no registration  
Leesburg Library  
Create an oasis in your garden or on your balcony. Containers can work in almost any space. Learn what plants work for containers, how to arrange them, and long-term care.

September 21, 2023, 2 – 3 pm  
Container Gardening Free and no registration  
Marianne Beck Library  
Create an oasis in your garden or on your balcony. Containers can work in almost any space. Learn what plants work for containers, how to arrange them, and long-term care.

## Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday and the third Saturday of the month from 9 am until 4 pm. Just like your yard, Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. Come see the changes in the garden.

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, An.dra D. Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.