



## Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article      October 02, 2017

### A Walk in the Clouds

by Lydia Holley

Gardening allows you to embrace the changes that each season brings. Autumn's seasonal beauties are many - colorful leaves, sensational spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*), awesome asters, beautiful beautyberry (*Callicarpa*), and a profusion of ornamental grasses that dance with the wind. Early autumn has become one of my favorite seasons, because this is when I get to walk in the clouds.



The clouds I get to walk through in my garden are the pink muhly grasses in bloom. Native to Texas, pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) sends up feathery plumes each autumn that resemble cotton candy. These plumes are made of thin, soft strands. They are as fine as hair, and as soft as a spider's web, with seed heads that look like fiber optics. On cool mornings, dew collects on the gossamer strands of each fluffy plume, and the effect is like a mysterious layer of fog floating just above the warm earth. It is easy to imagine that this might be what garden heaven looks like.

If pink does not fit with your garden's color scheme, there is a white form of muhly grass available. This cultivar of white muhly grass is appropriately named 'White Cloud'. These blooming clouds could be planted at the feet of taller plantings, which would make the plantings seem as though they were floating in air. On moonlit nights, White Cloud muhly grass would reflect the soft glow, shimmering like a luminous mirror image of the Milky Way galaxy.

Of course, with its ghostly form swaying in the lightest of breezes, if your muhly grass is in bloom when imaginative trick-or-treaters come around on Halloween, your garden could acquire a reputation for being haunted.

Muhly grass blooms do not last long. They are a seasonal delight. Like clouds, they are ephemeral, shifting shapes until they magically disappear. Although their bloom time is fleeting, they are well worth planting, just for a walk in the clouds.

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