



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article October 31, 2016

The Power of Plumes

by Lydia Holley

Autumn is when most grasses begin to throw up their beautiful plumes, adorning the garden with dainty jewels that sway in the breeze. Grasses can be planted as a specimen plant, as a part of the perennial garden, in a prairie planting, or as an informal hedge.



In my garden, I have placed several pink muhly grasses (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) in a loose arch around a piece of statuary which acts as a focal point. I have also seen pink muhly placed in a bed of low growing groundcovers, providing a season focal point when its plumes of fluffy seed heads emerge. You may prefer to add pink muhly to a bed of colorful perennials such as yellow lantana, red barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), and purple Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*).

Pink muhly grass has been named Henderson County Master Gardener Association's (HCMGA) "Plant of the Month" for November. You can see this plant at the HCMGA Dream Garden located inside the East Texas Arboretum. While you are there, be sure to take a look at Lindheimer's muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*) which blooms with golden seeds heads that sparkle like glitter when wet.

Other grasses you may wish to investigate for their beautiful plumes are zebra grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*), which also has interesting stripes of gold on its foliage; dwarf hameln grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*) which throws up bridal sprays of delicate pearls; or sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), which has seeds that dangle from only one side of its stems. Sideoats grama has also been designated as the State Grass of Texas.

When you add an ornamental grass or two to your garden, you may wonder in autumn, "Who needs blooms when you have plumes?"

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org