

September 28, 2016



Ornamental Grasses
by Sue McDavid
UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

It is no surprise that ornamental grasses are such a popular choice in landscapes. They are one of the most maintenance-free and beautiful plants one can use.

Grasses are categorized as either clumping or spreading. Clump-forming grasses form tidy mounds and spread slowly circumferentially. Spreading grasses grow by creeping roots and some can become invasive. When considering an ornamental grass, it usually makes sense to choose a clump-forming one, or at least one described as slow-spreading. If you have your heart set on a variety only to find it can become invasive, consider planting it in a large container. Over time, however, roots can grow out the bottom, so watch it carefully.

Most ornamental grasses prefer full sun exposure and tend to be tolerant of a wide range of soil types. Once established, most have deep root systems, making them drought-tolerant. However, as with all new plants, give them extra care during the first growing season by watering deeply on a regular basis.

Ornamental grasses are generally pest-free and deer do not bother them except to occasionally make them their bed.

Grasses, except evergreen ones, need to be sheared down in late winter. Most grasses are attractive throughout the winter months and many have seedheads that attract birds. Grasses have striking foliage and many have feathery plumes that make a nice addition to cut flower arrangements. Although grasses lack the large and colorful flowers of many perennial plants, their beauty is found in their foliage textures, colors and forms, and there is nothing more attractive than watching these plants sway in the breeze.

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Join Master Gardeners Gail Fulbeck and Sue McDavid, first in the classroom and later in the adjacent Sherwood Demonstration Garden (weather permitting) to learn which plants are best propagated in the fall, along with tips and techniques for propagation from cuttings, layering, and division. Participants are invited to help gather, prepare, and then pot up plant materials to bring home; bring clean pruning shears and gloves to participate. The free, four hour class is on Saturday, October 1st and starts 9:00 a.m. at Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center, and ends in the demonstration garden, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville.

Plan to come out to the first ever Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, September 24, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Perennials, flowers and more at great prices. The sale is at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, located behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener-e-news>. You can also find us on Facebook.