

Miscanthus sinensis 'Variegatus' Variegated Japanese Silver Grass¹

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Introduction

This cultivar of Japanese silver grass (maiden grass) has a distinctive, whitish band along each margin of the leaves, displaying a variegated effect. Leaves droop and weep toward the ground, as do many of the other cultivars. Slender leaves originate in a clump, spreading out and up like a fountain. The 5- to 7-foot-tall clumps bear pink flowers in a one-sided inflorescence in late summer and fall which can be used for drying or as a dye plant. Their pinkish or silvery 8- to 10-inch-long plumes persist into the winter. Foliage is flexible and blows easily in the wind. This shrub-like grass turns to a rich gold in the fall; the fall color lasts through the winter.

General Information

Scientific name: *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus'

Pronunciation: miss-KANTH-us sye-NEN-sis

Common name(s): variegated Japanese silver grass

Family: *Gramineae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 9 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; border; container or above-ground planter; screen; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 5 to 7 feet

Spread: 5 to 10 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: brown or tan

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit

Fruit length: no fruit

Fruit cover: no fruit

1. This document is FPS410, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date September 2007. Revised June 2007. Reviewed June 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Fruit color: no fruit

Fruit characteristic: no fruit

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement:

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay; slightly alkaline

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Japanese silver grass is frequently used in the landscape as a specimen or screen. It is also employed in group plantings, forming a nice mass of fine-textured foliage. Use Japanese silver grass as an accent or mass planted in a large-scale landscape, such as around a commercial building to add a touch of soft elegance and texture. The slightest breeze moves the foliage, allowing the landscape to “come alive.” Many people prefer to cut the grass back to the ground in the spring so new green growth is not covered with last year’s dried, brown foliage.

Japanese silver grass requires a location in the landscape that receives full sun, but it is adaptable to most well-drained soils. This ornamental grass is quite drought tolerant. *Miscanthus sinensis* is a warm season grass and transplants best in the spring. Provide good drainage at the planting site.

Other cultivars include: ‘Condensatus’, coarser leaf texture than species, mid-summer bloom, 7 to 8 feet tall; ‘Gracilimus’, narrower leaves than species, fall bloom, upright growth habit from 5 to 8 feet tall; ‘Purpurescens’, reddish foliage in summer, purple-red foliage in fall, silver pink

inflorescence, mid-summer bloom, 4 to 5 feet tall; ‘Silver Feather’, silvery white flowers in mid-summer; ‘Strictus’, horizontal yellow bands on foliage, upright growth habit, 6 to 8 feet tall; ‘Yaku Jima’, more compact, 3 to 4 feet tall; ‘Zebrinus’, horizontal yellow bands on foliage, wide spreading habit, to 7 feet tall.

The propagation of *Miscanthus sinensis* is by division in the spring.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Rust diseases occasionally infest the foliage but it often goes away in drier weather.