

**Muhlenbergia capillaris Muhly Grass**

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

Muhly grass has a clumping form, growing 3- to 4-feet-tall and about as wide. A stiff, upright growth habit makes this markedly different from many other grasses. Delicate, purple flowers emerge in the fall well above the foliage and can literally cover the foliage. It is native to pine flatwoods, coastal upland and beach dunes, and sandhill communities. This grass is very similar to *Muhlenbergia filipes*.

**General Description**

**Scientific name:** *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

**Pronunciation:** mew-len-BER-jee-uh kap-pill-LAIR-riss

**Common name(s):** purple muhly grass, muhly grass

**Family:** Gramineae

**Plant type:** herbaceous; ornamental grass

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 11 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** reclamation plant; cut flowers; border; accent; mass planting

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

**Height:** 3 to 5 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

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1. This document is FPS415, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu).

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**Flower**

Flower color: pink  
Flower characteristic: fall flowering

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: dry or hard  
Fruit color: brown  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: extended flooding; acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay  
Drought tolerance: high  
Soil salt tolerances: moderate  
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 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: not known to be invasive

**Use and Management**

Muhly grass is a tough native grass useful in many different landscape sites. It has extreme tolerance to drought and flooding, making it suited for wetland sites as well as beachfront landscapes. It would be hard to find a more adaptable grass. Muhly grass makes a nice, fine-textured mass planting for sites ranging from roadside to residential landscape. Plant them in large, sweeping drifts on a large landscape for a dramatic effect. It is virtually maintenance free except in those instances where you might want to remove the brown foliage in the spring by cutting the clump back to the ground before new growth emerges. Growth is best in sandy or rocky soil.

**Pest and Diseases**

There are no known pests or problems.