

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' Feather Reed Grass¹

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Introduction

Feather reed grass is an ornamental grass that attains a height of 5 to 6 feet. It is hopelessly confused with *C. acutiflora* 'Stricta'. Foliage usually reaches no more than 3 feet tall, but flowers are held several feet above the foliage. The medium green leaves of this plant are lanceolate in shape and may reach a length of 5 to 7 feet. They also exhibit good fall and winter color. The inflorescence of this plant is a compact, spikelike panicle that is up to 12 inches long. The inflorescence is loosely branched and has a pinkish white or reddish cast. They appear in the summer and are followed by attractive seedheads that are used in flower arrangements. This plant spreads by short rhizomes which allows it to slowly increase in diameter.

General Information

Scientific name: *Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

Pronunciation: kal-uh-muh-GRAW-stiss
ack-yoo-tif-FLORuh

Common name(s): feather reed grass

Family: *Gramineae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 5 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: specimen; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; cut flowers; border; accent

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

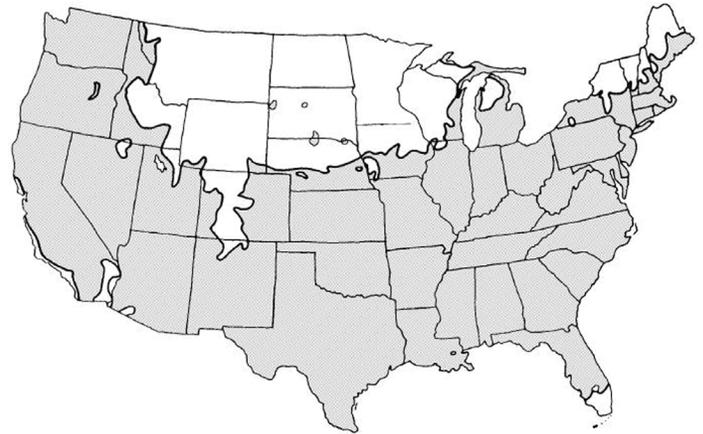


Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 5 to 6 feet

Spread: 5 to 7 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

1. This document is FPS84, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: brown or tan

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; purple

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: tan

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: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: extended flooding; clay; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

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: not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Feather reed grass is excellent for naturalized areas in freshwater bogs and swamps, around lakes and ponds, and along streams. It is suited for planting near water gardens due to its tolerance of wet soil. It is a great specimen plant but also looks great planted in mass. It can provide a tall screen or windbreak and is useful for erosion control.

This grass can grow in an area of the landscape receiving full sun or partial shade. It prefers wet brackish soils but will thrive in heavy clay soils with less moisture. The size of this plant depends on the moisture supply; it will grow larger with increased moisture levels, and in cooler climates.

The propagation of feather reed grass is accomplished by plant divisions.

Pests and Diseases

Usually free of pests and diseases.