

Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light' Morning Light Maiden Grass¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Maiden grass is a gracefully arching, fine-textured grass that forms dense, green clumps. 'Morning Light' has a white band along each margin. Slender leaves originate in a clump, spreading out and up like a fountain. The 5- to 6-foot-tall clumps bear pink flowers held above the foliage in late summer and fall that 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* 'Morning Light'

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

Common name(s): 'Morning Light' maiden 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



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 5 to 6 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

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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: red
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
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: plant grows in full sun
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

Maiden 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 maiden 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.

Maiden 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, August bloom, 7 to 8 feet tall; ‘Gracillimus’, narrower leaves than species, October bloom, upright growth habit from 5 to 8 feet tall; ‘Purpurescens’, reddish foliage in summer, purple-red foliage in fall, silver-pink inflorescence, August bloom, 4 to 5 feet tall; ‘Silver Feather’, silvery white flowers in August; ‘Strictus’, horizontal yellow bands on foliage, upright growth habit, 6 to 8 feet tall; ‘Variegatus’, white variegation on leaf margin, does relatively well in partial shade, to 7 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.