

# Miscanthus sinensis var. strictus Porcupine Grass, Banded Miscanthus<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This cultivar of maiden grass has a distinctive, neat upright growth habit. Few leaves droop or weep toward the ground as do many of the other cultivars. Slender leaves marked with a band of yellow originate in a clump, spreading out and up like a fountain. The 6- to 8-foot-tall clumps bear pink flowers in late summer and fall which can be used for drying or as a dye plant. Their pinkish or coppery 8- to 10-inch-long plumes are held above the foliage and persist into the winter. Foliage is stiffer than 'Zebrinus' but still 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 Description

**Scientific name:** *Miscanthus sinensis var. strictus*

**Pronunciation:** miss-KANTH-us sye-NEN-sis variety STRICK-tuss

**Common name(s):** porcupine grass, banded miscanthus

**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:** 6 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

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**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  
**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 part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; sand; loam; clay; slightly alkaline  
**Drought tolerance:**  
**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

Porcupine 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 porcupine 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.

Porcupine grass will grow in a location in the landscape that receives full sun or part shade. It is adaptable to most well-drained soils and will grow in several inches of standing water. This ornamental grass is not as tolerant to drought as many of the others. *Miscanthus sinensis* is a warm season grass and transplants best in the spring.

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; 'Purpureus', 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; '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; and '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 often go away in drier weather.