

# Miscanthus sinensis Maiden Grass<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Maiden grass is a gracefully arching, fine-textured grass that forms dense, green clumps (Fig. 1). Slender leaves originate in a clump, spreading out and up like a fountain. The 5- to 6-foot-tall clumps bear pink flowers 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.

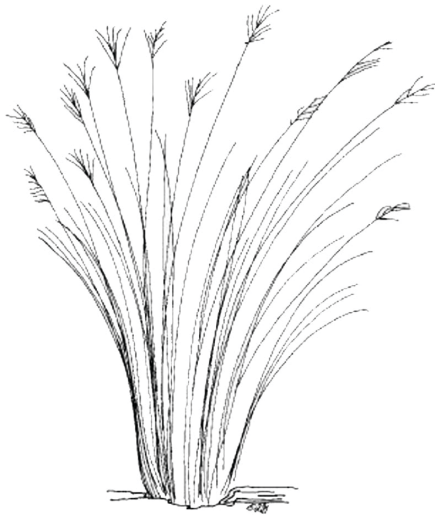


Figure 1. Maiden grass

## General Description

**Scientific name:** *Miscanthus sinensis*

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

**Common name(s):** Japanese silver grass, maiden grass

**Family:** *Gramineae*

**Plant type:** herbaceous; ornamental grass

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**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 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 5 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** moderate

1. This document is FPS405, 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>.

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

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

**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:** 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, especially near a water garden or pond. 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 mixed 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. Three- and four-year-old plants tend to flop over and might thin in the center of the clump. They can be divided or cut back to encourage more upright growth.

Cultivars include 'Condensatus', coarser leaf texture than species, mid-summer bloom, 7 to 8 feet tall; 'Gracillimus', 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; '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.