

Muhlenbergia capillaris Muhly Grass¹

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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

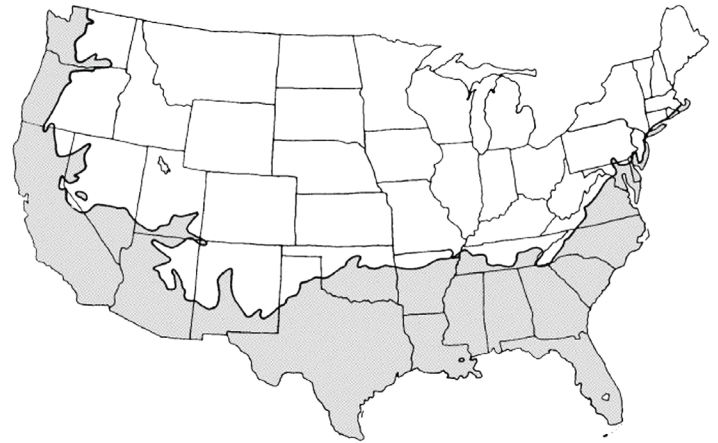


Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen

Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: copper

Fall characteristic: showy

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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.