

# *Muhlenbergia capillaris* Muhly Grass<sup>1</sup>

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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*.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Muhlenbergia capillaris*: Muhly Grass  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Flower - *Muhlenbergia capillaris*: Muhly Grass  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Description

**Scientific name:** *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

**Pronunciation:** mew-len-BER-jee-uh kap-pill-LAIR-riss

**Common name(s):** purple muhly grass, muhly grass, hairawn muhly

**Family:** *Poaceae*

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**Plant type:** herbaceous; ornamental grass

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 11 (Figure 3)

**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

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Uses:** reclamation plant; cut flowers; border; accent; mass planting

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



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 3 to 5 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

## 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

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink

**Flower characteristic:** fall flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** less than 0.5 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

## 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.