



<http://haverfield.com/2011/04/25/garden-designers-round-up-top-landscape-plants/>

Ornamental Grasses

Invasive species to avoid and beautiful native species to try!

Ornamental grasses are a popular choice among gardeners. They add colour and texture as they sway in the wind and are great options for privacy or borders.

Become familiar with which grasses are considered invasive and try switching them for a native alternative! Make sure to ask your local garden centres about the plant you are purchasing and inquire about native species.

Benefits to Landscaping with Native Grasses

- Creates habitat for native birds, animals and pollinators
- Improves landscape connectivity
- Reduces soil erosion
- Improves water infiltration into the soil
- Low cost
- Low maintenance

For the Birds! Many tallgrass prairie birds such as the endangered Henslow's Sparrow (top) and threatened Bobolink (bottom) rely on these grasses for survival. By switching to native grasses you are helping provide new habitat. Tall grasses conceal their ground nests from predators and seeds are a source of food!



<http://www.howardview.com/SparrowStudy/Sparrows.html>



<http://www.ontarionature.org/connect/blog/saving-bobolinks/>

Ornamental Grass to **Avoid**

There are many grasses that originate from Eurasia that are now becoming invasive in Ontario.

Commonly found along shorelines and ditches, these plants threaten ecosystems by forming dense stands that crowd out native species. They also impact recreation and tourism by impeding shoreline views and access to water. Get to know which invasive grasses to avoid, and try substituting for native grasses.



Chinese Silver Grass
(*Miscanthus grasses*)

Photo: Fox Hollow Farms



Plume Grass
(*Erianthus ravennae*)

Photo: Kaw Valley Greenhouse



Pampas Grass
(*Cortaderia selloana*)

Photo: Fine Gardening



Giant Reed Grass
(*Arundo donax L.*)

Photo: Joanna M. Foster



Common Reed Grass
(*Phragmites australis*)

Photo: NVCA



Creeping Lily Turf
(*Liriope spicata*)

Photo: Lynn Coulter

Ornamental Grass to Try



Little Bluestem

(Schizachyrium scoparium)

Height is between 60 cm and 1.2 m tall. It is a great option for a border or to add colour in the fall and winter. It grows from bluish-green roots which turn mahogany red in the fall with purple/bronze seeds and white tufts. It requires full sun and can tolerate most soil types.

Photo: <http://www.ufseeds.com>



Switchgrass

(Panicum virgatum)

Colourful blue/green-burgundy foliage in the fall is known to attract birds. It has purple/brown-green flowers that bloom July-September. Switchgrass can reach heights of 2.5 m tall and requires full sun. It is found in a variety of habitats and soil types.

Photo: <https://davisla.wordpress.com/>



Big Bluestem

(Andropogon gerardii)

Growing to be 1-2.5 m tall, Big Bluestem is an excellent screening option. It has silvery-red flowers which are said to look like a "turkey foot." Sparrows and other songbirds eat these seeds. It has distinct blue, grey to dark red and brown foliage and flower colour.

Photo: <https://www.prairiemoon.com>



Prairie Dropseed

(Sporobolus heterolepis)

A great groundcover, growing in clumps approximately 60 cm tall. Orange plumes appear in the late summer/early fall and foliage turns golden in the fall. It is drought tolerant and requires full sun. It attracts birds and is deer resistant.

Photo by Mike Perry, <http://shavenook.com>



Indian Grass

(Sorghastrum nutans)

Indian Grass reaches heights of 1-2 m, ending in a golden seed head. This is an attractive grass in all seasons and is often used in landscaping. It is drought tolerant and useful for erosion control. Provides wildlife habitat.

Photo: <https://extension.umass.edu>



Bottlebrush Grass

(Elymus hystrix)

A woodland grass that can tolerate more shade than other tall grass prairie grasses. It reaches heights of 1.5 m and requires well-drained soils. Its open, bristly spike looks like a bottle brush, hence the name. Flowers are a white/cream or green/brown colour that appear in June-August.

Photo: Ken Parker



How can you help reduce the spread of invasive species?

- Learn to identify invasive species. Early detection is very important in the management process.
- Try gardening with native species. If that is not an option, be sure to ask garden centres about non-invasive plants.
- Stay on designated trails. Be sure to clean off clothing and any equipment after being in an area that may have invasive species.
- Properly bag and dispose of invasive species at your local landfill.
- Check species origins at invasiveplantatlas.org

Report invasive species!

- Ontario Invasive Species Program: invadingspecies.com
- Ontario Invasive Plant Council: ontarioinvasiveplants.ca



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