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WINTER HOURS

7:30 am — 4:30 pm Office
7:00 am — 3:30 pm Yard
Monday through Friday
Closed Weekends and Major Holidays

UPCOMING EVENTS / NOTICES

November 4–5

Desert Green VIII

Henderson Convention Center, Henderson, NV
Info: Contact Helen Stone at 702.454.3057 for exhibit space or ML Robinson at 702.257.5529 for registration.

November 18

Arizona Nursery Association Annual Membership Dinner Meeting

Desert Botanical Garden, Tempe, AZ
Info: Contact Cheryl Goar, 480.966.1610

November 19–20

2004 Arizona Landscape Contractor's Association Excellence in Landscaping Awards Program

Hilton El Conquistador, Tucson, AZ.

Info: Contact Judy Gausman, 480.296.2064 or judy@azlca.com

November 25–26

Mountain States will be closed in celebration of Thanksgiving.

December 1

University of California Riverside Less Water, More Landscape—

What's Next?: Emerging Turf and Landscape Irrigation Challenges

UC Riverside Extension, 1200 University Avenue, Riverside, CA. Info: Contact UCRE, 951.827.5804 or email sciences@ucr.edu.

December 4

Southern Nevada Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects Pink Flamingo Banquet

Rio Secco Golf Course Country Club, Las Vegas, NV.
Info: Contact Cassie Dawes, 702.597.3943 or cassid@southwickla.com

December 24

Mountain States will be closed in celebration of Christmas. May you and your loved ones have a wonderful holiday!

NOTICE!

Please check your PDA's & biz card books and note that the mobile number for Dennis Swartzell has been changed to 702.400.3622 or you may dial toll free at 800.423.6452. Please delete the former number with the 602 area code, as this belongs to a new owner. Thank you!

THANK YOU!

Mountain States would like to thank our customers, vendors and friends for helping us celebrate our 35th Year of Business with our Open House celebration. We look forward to serving you for another year! Congratulations Ron & Maureen... you're the best!

MASSES OF GRASSES

G *grass is the hair of the earth.* — Karl Foerster, late, famed German horticulturist

Humans have had strong ties with grasses through the centuries. We have used grass grains as a food source, bamboo to construct shelters, thatch and sod for rooftops. Our love affair with grasses became quite evident when we as Americans adopted the concept of lawns. Vast acres of turf manicured for the adornment of our homes and cemeteries and employed to protect our parks and athletic fields. But grasses have evolved beyond the utilitarian need for green. Ornamental grasses are becoming increasingly popular.

Every savvy gardener knows that ornamental grasses are radiant when backlit by the sun in the early morning or late afternoon hours. Well placed grasses capture the wind and provide dramatic movement in the landscape. Grasses add softness and tranquil eloquence to the garden. The composition of colors, textures and forms, constantly evolving through each season, adds interest and intrigue to any landscape design. Desert landscapes particularly benefit from the softness that grasses provide.

Grasses can be grouped into two major growth habits. Running grasses form dense mats of creeping stems. Many lawn grasses fall into this group for obvious reasons. They are useful for erosion control and slope stabilization. Clumping grasses constitute the vast majority of the ornamental grasses. Growing in bunches known as tufts, the size and form can vary widely. Some can be stiff and wiry,

while others are soft and fountain-like.

Ornamental grasses may also be grouped by their season of growth. Basically there are warm-season grasses and cool-season grasses. As one might guess, the climate plays a major role in how grasses are classified, with moisture and temperature being the most dominant factors. Many ornamental grasses enter a state of dormancy during the “off season.” For example, most of the Muhlenbergia species are warm-season grasses that go dormant in the winter.

Most ornamental grasses are best left to their own resources, making them great low maintenance plants. Dormant grasses are best suited to remain as they are through the winter months. Just before new growth emerges they may be cut back to eliminate the dead foliage.

If you are new to the “grass culture” or have never been a big fan of grasses used for ornament, perhaps you would like to take a peek at the following offerings from Mountain States.

If you are an old fan, perhaps the following paragraphs will be like listening to a favorite recording. The music still sounds pretty good.

Andropogon gerardii

(syn. *Bothriochloa gerardii*)...

Big Bluestem

Big Bluestem is widespread throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico and was a dominant grass in

the prairies of the Midwest. This clumping grass provides a strong vertical form in the landscape. During the warm months, the leaves are lush blue-green, changing to coppery-red as the temperatures cool. Three-pronged silvery seed heads are produced in the fall. Big Bluestem is long-lived, and not fussy about soils, temperature extremes, or moisture. It can tolerate slightly waterlogged conditions.

Andropogon scoparius (syn. Schizachyrium scoparium)...

Little Bluestem
Native across most of North America, this grass varies greatly in form and appearance. The foliage color ranges from green to blue, and the dormant foliage varies from tan to rusty red. Blue-leaved plants are more likely to develop red winter color. Little bluestem has a very upright form, with fine-textured foliage. The flowers are not showy, but the seed heads are striking when backlit by the sun. This clump grass is very adaptable, tolerating cold, heat, and thriving in alkaline or acid soils. It does not perform well in soils with excessive moisture or nutrients.

Aristida purpurea...Purple Three Awn

The purple-tinted stems and flowers of this erect, compact grass attract attention during the warm months, especially where it grows abundantly along roadsides. The fine-textured foliage ranges in color from green to blue. In the fall, the three long awns attached to each seed glow in the sunlight. It has a wide distribution, growing at elevations from 1000 to 5000 feet in much of the Southwest. It thrives in sunny, dry locations, preferring minimal irrigation. It reseeds prolifically if water is available.

November/December 2004

***Bouteloua curtipendula*...**

Sideoats Grama

This clump grass is native to the prairies of North America at elevations from 2500 to 7000 feet. Narrow blue-green leaves turn tan in the winter months. In the late spring and summer unusual pink-purple flower spikes are produced, followed by large seeds that develop on one side of the stiff stalk. This small grass is long-lived, tough, and tolerant of heat and drought.

***Bouteloua gracilis*...Blue Grama**

Blue Grama is easily identified by its distinctive curved comblike seedheads, which appear during the summer. The leaves are light green, drying to a tan color in the winter. In the hot, low deserts, Blue Grama tends to be a small bunchgrass to 2 feet tall by 2 feet wide. In cooler, moist climates it can form a fairly dense sod. It is one of the best grasses for the arid West and can easily be kept at 2 inches for a xeric lawn.

***Cortaderia selloana* ‘Pumila’...**

Dwarf Pampas Grass

This dwarf version of pampas grass is much more in scale with most residential landscapes. In the summer, many stalks of fluffy white flower plumes rise above the foliage. Plant in full sun and provide moderate irrigation. This dwarf variety is much less likely to reseed than the regular species.

***Muhlenbergia capillaris* Regal Mist™**

This small clump grass with narrow, glossy green leaves is native to east Texas. A frothy haze of deep pink flowers covers the plant in the fall. Plant in full sun, reflected heat, or part shade. Cut this fast-growing plant to the ground in late winter or early spring to remove the brown leaves and spent flowers. It needs ample irrigation in the summer to maintain a lush appearance.

***Muhlenbergia dumosa*...Bamboo Muhly**

Native to lower elevations in southern Arizona and northern Mexico, this clump grass has unique fine-textured chartreuse foliage. Its soft, billowy texture provides a wonderful foil for bold succulents and cacti. The light green flowers are fairly insignificant. This grass spreads slowly from underground stems,

eventually forming a large clump. It thrives in full sun or part shade, and is adapted to a wide range of soils. It appreciates moderate to ample summer irrigation.

***Muhlenbergia emersleyi* El Toro™...**

Bull Grass

This clump grass forms dense colonies in oak woodlands from Arizona to Texas. This clone was collected in southeastern Arizona, and was selected for its showy flowers. This dense grass has a slightly coarse texture, with long blue-green leaves. In the fall months it sends up masses of loose, rosy-purple flower spikes, which dry to a tan color in the winter. This muhly is extremely drought tolerant, and thrives in full sun and reflected heat locations, as well as in part shade. A vigorous spring pruning will remove any dormant foliage and flower spikes.

***Muhlenbergia lindheimeri* Autumn Glow™**

Native to Texas, this clump grass has a strong vertical form, with slender, green leaves. Tall spikes of light yellow flowers emerge in the fall and quickly fade to tan. Plant in full sun, reflected heat, or part shade. Moderate to ample summer irrigation will keep the foliage lush in the heat. Prune back brown foliage and spent spikes in early spring.

***Muhlenbergia rigens*...Deer Grass**

Native to the Southwest at elevations up to 7000 feet, this adaptable grass boasts lush green-blue foliage that softens desert landscapes. In the fall it sends up slender tan flower spikes that create a stunning contrast with the mound of luxuriant foliage. Plant in full sun, reflected heat, or part shade. Provide ample water in the summer to keep foliage looking lush. Cut back as needed in the spring.

***Muhlenbergia rigida* Nashville™**

This southwestern native forms a small clump of fine-textured light green foliage. In the late summer and fall it sends up purple-tan spikes that dry to a

wheat color. Plant in full sun, reflected heat, or part shade. Cut back as needed in early spring.

Nassella tenuissima

(syn. *Stipa tenuissima*)...

Mexican Feather grass, Threadgrass

This fast-growing little grass is native to New Mexico, Texas, Mexico and Argentina, at elevations from 5000 to 7000 feet. Light breezes turn this fine-textured and billowy grass into living sculpture. Mexican feather grass forms a clump of chartreuse threadlike leaves and stems, which turns gold in the winter. It is fairly short lived, but naturalizes in the landscape. Plant in full sun to part shade and provide excellent drainage. Cut back in early spring to remove dormant foliage and dried seed heads.

***Panicum virgatum* ‘Prairie Sky’...**

Blue Switch Grass

The U.S. native has wide blue leaves and airy flower spikes that create a misty cloud in the summer months. Plant in full sun and provide supplemental irrigation. Cut back annually to maintain a dense form.

***Panicum virgatum* ‘Dallas Blues’...**

Blue Switch Grass

Dallas Blues is an impressive ornamental grass originally collected in north Dallas. It has thin, bright blue leaves that are reportedly some of the bluest in the industry. It has an upright columnar habit creating a large clump. It is tolerant of wet or dry soils, with the intensity of the foliage color increasing with drought. Pink to mauve fall flowers are held in interesting patterns above the foliage. The blue foliage transitions to tan or light brown in the winter.

***Sporobolus airoides*...Alkali Sacaton**

Alkali sacaton is native across the western U.S. and Mexico, at elevations from 2500 to 6500 feet. The wide green leaves turn gold in the fall, drying to a tan color in the winter. In the summer it sends up tall, airy, rosy flower spikes that fade to buff.

Plant in full sun and any soils, including difficult saline sites.

***Sporobolus wrightii*...Giant Sacaton**

This grass is native from southeastern Arizona to west Texas in dry, alkaline, sandy flats or rocky slopes at elevations from 2000 to 7000 feet. The gray green leaves turn yellow in the fall and fade to tan in the winter. Showy, feather-like panicles up to 7 feet tall decorate the plant in late summer. Plant in full sun and any soils.

***Vetiveria zizanioides*...Vetiver**

This stately clumping grass has green leaves that develop streaks of bronze and red in the fall. Decorative curly-Q’s form at the leaf tips when the blades bend, turn brown and curl. Plant in full sun and supply moderate irrigation. Cut back in the spring.

Sedges are grass-like plants that are found throughout the globe, predominantly in cool and moist climates. We think these *Carex* species will provide interest as lawn substitutes, or in natural meadows.

***Carex pansa*...California Meadow Sedge**

This creeping sedge is native to California, and has performed surprisingly well in the hot low deserts. It forms a low green mat of green linear foliage, spreading by rhizomes. Plant in full sun to part shade and provide moderate to ample irrigation. Overhead sprays help to keep the foliage green in the summer months. It handles some foot traffic, and is a possible alternative to turfgrass.

***Carex perdentata*...**

Texas Hill Country Sedge

Native to Texas, this sedge forms a mostly evergreen clump of bright green foliage. The flowers are inconspicuous. It may be used as an unmowed, clumping groundcover, but should also tolerate mowing. In low deserts it thrives in afternoon shade, but also looks good in full sun if ample water is provided. It is evergreen in milder areas.

***Carex tumulicola*...Berkeley Sedge**

This sedge occurs in arid areas from Washington to central California. The dark green foliage forms arching clumps. The small brown flowers are not showy, but provide some textural interest. This plant spreads slowly from rhizomes. Use either in an unmowed, natural form, or as a lawn substitute. It is evergreen in milder areas.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Min Temp	H' x W'	Flower Color
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Big Bluestem	-20	6–8 x 3–4	Green
<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	Little Bluestem	-30	2–3 x 1–2	Green
<i>Aristida purpurea</i>	Purple Three Awn	-10	2 x 2	Green
<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	Sideoats Grama	-30	2 x 2	Pink
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	Blue Grama	-30	2 x 2	Green
<i>Cortaderia selloana</i> ‘Pumila’	Dwarf Pampas Grass	0	6 x 6	White
<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i> Regal Mist™		0	3 x 3	Pink
<i>Muhlenbergia dumosa</i>	Bamboo Muhly	10	4–5 x 4–5	Green
<i>Muhlenbergia emersleyi</i> El Toro™		0	3 x 3	Purple
<i>Muhlenbergia lindheimeri</i> Autumn Glow™		0	5 x 5	Yellow
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Deer Grass	0	4–5 x 4–5	Tan
<i>Muhlenbergia rigida</i> Nashville™		0	2 x 2	Purple
<i>Nassella tenuissima</i>	Mexican Feather Grass	-10	2 x 2	Tan
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> ‘Prairie Sky’	Blue Switch Grass	-30	5 x 5	Purple
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> ‘Dallas Blues’	Blue Switch Grass	-30	5 x 5	Pink
<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Alkali Sacaton	-20	3 x 4	Rose
<i>Sporobolus wrightii</i>	Giant Sacaton	-30	4–5 x 4–5	Green
<i>Vetiveria zizanioides</i>	Vetiver	25	5–8 x 5–8	Green
Grass Cousins				
<i>Carex pansa</i>	California Meadow Sedge	15	1 x 1	Green
<i>Carex perdentata</i>	Texas Hill Country Sedge	0	1 x 1.5	Green
<i>Carex tumulicola</i>	Berkeley Sedge	15	1.5 x 1.5	Brown

For more information and photos of these grasses, visit PLANTIS™ on our website: www.mswm.com

How terrible a garden without grasses.
— Karl Foerster