Switch Grass, Hot Rod

Panicum virgatum 'Hot Rod'

Height: 4 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3b

Description:

This sturdy selection forms a neat, vertical clump of striking blue-green foliage that is tinged with red in summer, then turns rich burgundy red in the fall; red plumes appear in late summer; perfect as a landscape accent, or along borders

Ornamental Features

Switch Grass, Hot Rod features airy plumes of red flowers with pink overtones rising above the foliage from mid to late summer. Its attractive grassy leaves are bluish-green in color with showy dark red variegation and tinges of coppery-bronze. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of burgundy and in the fall. The dark red seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from early fall to mid winter.

Landscape Attributes

Switch Grass, Hot Rod is an herbaceous perennial grass with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cut back to the ground in late winter before active growth resumes. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Switch Grass, Hot Rod is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use



Switch Grass, Hot Rod foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Switch Grass, Hot Rod
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Switch Grass, Hot Rod will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. To help this plant achive its best flowering performance, periodically apply a flower-boosting fertilizer from early spring through into the active growing season. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for alkaline soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.