Switch Grass, Red Sunset

Panicum virgatum 'Red Sunset'



Switch Grass, Red Sunset foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4a

Description:

This tall selection forms an upright clump of blue-green leaves turning to wine-red by summer; airy heads of tiny rosy-red flowers appear on plumes in mid summer; perfect as an accent or massed in borders; can take drier conditions once established

Ornamental Features

Switch Grass, Red Sunset features airy plumes of rose flowers with red overtones rising above the foliage in mid summer. Its attractive grassy leaves emerge bluish-green in spring, turning dark red in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous red in the fall. The brown seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to mid fall. The tan stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Switch Grass, Red Sunset 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, Red Sunset is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use

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Planting & Growing

Switch Grass, Red Sunset 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.