

Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

# Ornamental Grasses



**Jason Vaughn**  
**CEA for Ag and Natural Resources**

# Natural History of Grasses

- Relative newbie on the plant stage
  - Wind Pollinated
  - Basal Meristem
  - C4 photosynthesis

# Grasses in the Garden

- Texture and movement
- Seasonal interest
- Low-maintenance
- Good companion plant
- Ecological benefits

# Prairie Dropseed

- *Sporobolus heteropolis*
- Graceful clumps
- Seedheads are fragrant
- Very slow to establish



# Switchgrass

- *Panicum spp.*
- Drought/Wet tolerant
- Variety of colors- red/blue/purple
- 'Northwind'
  - Great vertical accent
  - Backdrop for many perennials







# Little Bluestem

- *Schizachyrium scoparium*
- Many varieties
- Great color and size
- Very quick to flop
- 'Standing Ovation'





# Big Bluestem

- *Andropogon gerardii*
- Attractive seedheads
- Tolerant of moist soils
- Varieties get 5-6 ft. tall





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Photo courtesy of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens



# Pink Muhly Grass

- *Muhlenbergia capillaris*
- Avoid wet soils
- Plant in early summer
- Great for dry soils, steep banks
- Amazing fall color



# Karl Forster Reed Grass

- *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'
- 2001 Perennial Plant of the Year
- 2ft clumps
- Very adaptable and reliable







# Maintenance

- Cut Back
- Division







# What to Avoid?

- Planting too late
- Heavy seeders
  - River oats
  - Chinese silver grass
- Rapid rhizomes
  - Japanese blood grass
  - Running Bamboo

*Special thanks to Hoffman Nurseries for  
use of the pictures.*



**Jason Vaughn**

Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent  
University of Kentucky

Powell County Cooperative Extension Service

169 Maple Street

Stanton, KY 40380

606-663-6404

[jason.vaughn@uky.edu](mailto:jason.vaughn@uky.edu)