



Ornamental Grass Planting Guide

About Ornamental Grasses

Ornamental grasses are versatile plants that can be the centerpieces or accents in garden areas. They soften landscaped areas and provide textural interest. Grasses such as Mexican Feather Grass and Foxtail Millet sway and move in the wind as versatile, garden area accents. Alternately, Pampas Grass creates a large, statement piece sure to garner attention.

When to Plant

Ornamental grass seeds are very small and easily blow away in the wind. They are also susceptible to being washed out with the rain and bird predation. You may find improved rates of germination by starting indoors in late winter or early spring, then transplant outdoors in late spring.

Where to Plant

Any full sun location with ordinary, reasonably well-drained soil will suffice for planting ornamental grass seed. Plant it away from walking paths and playing areas, as many of these grasses have sharp-edged blades that can cut through skin.

How to Plant

Lightly press the grass seed into the potting mix surface. Grass seeds need light to germinate, so do not cover the seeds with soil more than $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch. Water the seed to help it secure a good seed to soil contact. Place the tray of starts on a heating mat or on top of the refrigerator to give them the moderately steady heat they need to germinate. Placing the small pots into a sealed plastic bag retains enough moisture that no further watering is necessary while also allowing air flow. Depending on the type of seed, germination can occur in a week or up to a month.

Once you see young seedlings, remove the pots from the bag. Move the seedlings to a location that receives plenty of light and cooler temperatures. Mist or lightly water the soil so as to prevent the plants from ever drying out. Be cautious of overwatering, as this may cause the grass seeds to rot. Increasing sun exposure will harden off grass seedlings and help them acclimate to outdoor conditions.

Plant the ornamental grass seedlings in full sun in compost amended soil anytime during the growing season. A rule of thumb is to space seedlings as far apart as the mature plant will become tall, or a little closer if you need quick ground cover. Use a shovel to dig holes slightly larger than the root ball, then add water to the hole. Place the root ball in the hole, then replace the soil.

Caring for Ornamental Grass

With perennial grasses, water sparingly once established. Grasses may need increased hydration during drought-like periods. Some grasses, like Mexican Feather Grass, easily reseed and you will see small seedlings cropping up in the vicinity of your first planting. The root structure is small and these can easily be pulled up by hand and thrown away or transplanted if desired. Most perennial grasses can be pruned in early spring to remove old or dead parts and encourage new growth. Because most grow in clumps, they can be divided using a sharp spade.