Homestead Gardens Plant Finder

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Northwind Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum 'Northwind'



Northwind Switch Grass
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3a

Ornamental Features

Northwind Switch Grass features airy plumes of rose flowers rising above the foliage in mid summer. Its attractive grassy leaves are olive green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous gold in the fall. The brick red 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

Northwind Switch Grass is an herbaceous perennial grass with a rigidly upright and towering form. 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.

Northwind Switch Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Vertical Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use



Northwind Switch Grass in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Northwind Switch Grass 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 is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under typical garden conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. 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.



Northwind Switch Grass in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder