
ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH436



CALAMAGROSTIS PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

Thomas M. Blessington, David L. Clement, and Kevin G. Williams
Central Maryland Research and Education Center
University of Maryland

INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Feather Reed Grass
- Scientific name: *Calamagrostis acutiflora*
- Native to temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere
- Perennial grass with a narrow, vertical growth habit
- Shiny, dark green foliage appears in early spring and lasts until late fall
- Foliage grows 2-3' tall and up to 18'' wide
- Flower stems can reach 5' in height and form narrow, golden tan seed heads in late summer

- Foliage may remain evergreen in mild winters
- Hardy in zones 4-9

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Prefers full sun or partial shade
- Grows best in well-drained, fertile media with some moisture
- Tolerates heavy clay or sandy media
- Fertilization will provide maximum height

PROPAGATION

- Propagated by division in fall or spring

- Division into large clumps in fall will produce flowers the following spring
- Division into smaller clumps will produce plants that require a second growing season to produce mature flowerheads
- Flowers are sterile so the plant cannot be grown from seed

DISORDERS

- Foliar rust (*Puccinia sp.*)
 - Occurs in wet summers
 - Improve air circulation
 - Typically not a major threat to plant health

CONSUMER CARE

- Stems should be cut 6-12'' above the ground in early spring
- Provides an excellent vertical accent to a garden
- Often used in fresh or dried arrangements

- If cut before flowers mature, stems will last for months in an arrangement

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Calamagrostis acutiflora*
 - 'Avalanche': vertical blades with wide white central stripes; silvery-tan plumes
 - 'Eldorado': gold-variegated version of 'Karl Foerster'; deep green with a yellow stripe
 - 'Karl Foerster': vertical habit, pink inflorescence turns to a wheat color
 - 'Overdam': variegated foliage, gold inflorescence

References

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calamagrostis>
<http://www.perennialplant.org/ppy/01ppy.html>
<http://www.flower-gardening-made-easy.com/Calamagrostis-x-acutiflora-Karl-Foerster.html>