

Ornamental Landscape Grasses For Our Area!

By Cheryl Huber, Fort Bend Master Gardeners

The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners tested 72 species of ornamental landscape grasses so that we could recommend which ones are the hardiest for our area.

Phase 1 of the two-year trial subjected various species of landscape grass to extreme heat and drought. After the grasses were planted, we provided water twice a week for four weeks to get them established and then irrigation was halted.

We found that the top 12 ornamental grasses were:

- *Melinis nerviglumis* (Ruby Crystals Grass)
- *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' (Fountain Grass)
- *Pennisetum* 'Princess Caroline' (Purple Fountain Grass)
- *Andropogon Scoparius* (Little Blue Stem)
- *Panicum Virgatum*, 'Shenandoah' (Switchgrass)
- *Cymbopogon* sp. (Lemongrass)
- *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (Pink Muhly Grass)
- *Miscanthus sinensis* (Maiden Grass selections)
- *Dianella tasmanica* variegata (Variegated Flax Lily)
- *Carex phyllocephala* (Sparkler Sedge)
- *Anthericum saundersiae* (Shooting Star Lily)
- *Chrysopogon zizanioides* (Vetiver Grass)



In Phase 2 of the trial the grasses were subjected to an unusually hard freeze and weeks of rain due to Hurricane Harvey. The grasses that thrived were:

- *Juncus effusus* (Common Rush)
- *Panicum virgatum* ('Dallas Blues' Switchgrass)

- *Cortaderia selloana* (Pink Pampas Grass)
- *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus' (Variegated Maiden Grass)