

AlterNATIVES to Chinese Silvergrass!

Miscanthus sinensis & *M. sacchariflorus*

What is Chinese Silvergrass?

Chinese Silvergrass, also sometimes called Maidenhair Grass or Zebra Grass, is a popular ornamental in landscaping. It is available in several cultivars, including with variegated leaves.

Why Shouldn't I Plant It?

While attractive, *Miscanthus* is not native to North America, and often escapes from plantings. It spreads along disturbed ground and natural areas and can create large patches, displacing native plants. The grass is also very flammable and increases the fire risks of invaded areas. Depending on the species, this invasive can spread via seeds and/or underground rhizomes.

Why Should I Choose a Native Alternative?

Native plants are not only beautiful, they also benefit birds and other wildlife. Unlike non-native species, these plants support multiple pollinators and insects, providing food for Indiana birds. Also, if spread to nearby natural areas, natives plants don't harm existing ecosystems.

For More Information

- Indiana Native Plant Society: www.indiananativeplants.org
- Indiana Invasive Species Council: www.indianainvasivespecies.org
- Local SWCDs: iaswcd.org/contact-your-local-swcd/
- **Additional native ornamental grasses include:** Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Prairie Cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*), Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

Created by the Daviess-Dubois-Martin Invasive Plant Partnership, with funding from a Clean Water Indiana grant.

Photos courtesy of: Martha Bishop Ferguson; James Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org; Matt Lavin, CC BY-SA 2.0, David J. Stang, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons; Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Prairie Dropseed

(*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

- Grows 2-4 ft tall
- A fountain of fine textured leaves, green in summer with a golden hue in fall/winter
- Needs sun but can tolerate dry to medium soils. Plant 18-24" apart for a nice border



Indian Grass

(*Sorghastrum nutans*)

- Grows 4-7 ft tall, needs full sun, but tolerates a variety of soils, including clay
- Dramatic blue-green summer foliage, golden fall color, and rich golden-bronze seed heads
- Can be aggressive, so not suited to small landscapes, may flop over if planted alone



Switchgrass

(*Panicum virgatum*)

- 3-6 ft upright growth, tolerates many soils
- Produces a cloud of airy seed heads in fall with a slight purple-tint
- Fall and winter foliage turns golden
- Can be aggressive, so not suited to small landscapes, but less likely to flop over



Big Bluestem

(*Andropogon gerardii*)

- Tallest option at 5-8 ft tall, tolerates a wide variety of soil types & moisture
- Range of color: blue-green in spring, purple tinted flowers, and red-bronze in fall/winter
- Best mixed with other plants, more sparse growth may flop over if planted alone

