

## GARDENING

# Masses of grasses have attractive features

## GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

the year by the Perennial Plant Association.

As with many grasses, very little maintenance is required; it's handsome throughout the year and is easy to grow and propagate.

"Karl Foerster" is a tall,

Ornamental grasses still play an important part in the landscape and the cultivar "Karl Foerster" of feather reed grass, *Calamagrostis acutifolia*, has been chosen as the 2001 perennial plant of the year by the Perennial Plant Association.

The arching foliage reaches 2 to 3 feet tall, and flower stems to 5 or 6 feet tower above the foliage, making a very attractive display. Panicles of pinkish bronze flowers arrive in mid to late summer and then fade to pale brown. Winter interest is guaranteed.

The PPA suggests growing this grass with herbaceous perennials, such as asters, Aster spp.; coneflowers, Echinacea spp.; gayfeathers, Liatris spp.; and black-eyed Susans, Rudbeckia spp., which bloom in late summer and fall.

When I last wrote about grasses, several of you wanted more information. With that in mind, I'd like to share a list of the most

desirable ornamental grasses according to Art Cameron, Department of Horticulture, Michigan State University.

I had the pleasure of attending his lecture and I'm sure he won't mind if I share his thoughts with you. "Karl Foerster" is included in his selection and he calls it a "great plant."

There are several Miscanthus species. They are:

■ *M. sinensis zebrinus* (zebra grass), 6 to 8 feet with a weeping habit; *M. sinensis strictus* (porcupine grass), more upright, same height. These big, bold grasses have horizontal stripes and are excellent specimens. Plant in masses.

■ *M. sinensis gracillimus* (maiden grass) and "Sambanda," both 5 to 8 feet. Known for their fine-textured leaves, excellent for massing - particularly in

rows or arcs to accentuate the effect of the texture.

■ *M. sinensis variegatus* (variegated Japanese silver grass), 6 to 7 feet; and *M. sinensis "Morning Light"* (silver variegated silver grass), 4 to 5 feet. Stripes run up the leaves. Both are good as specimen plants. Variegated form has wider leaves; "Morning Light," thin leaves. Interesting specimens. Bloom late with dark inflorescence.

■ *M. sinensis purpurascens* (purple maiden grass), 3 to 5 feet; especially good-looking when it blooms in July-August, as specimen or massed.

■ *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (fountain grass), 3 to 4 feet; and *P. alopecuroides* "Hameln," (dwarf fountain grass), 1 to 2 feet. Indispensable in garden settings, complement colorful annuals, good texture. Attractive

August blooms.

■ *Deschampsia caespitosa* "Goldstaub" (tufted hair grass), 2 to 3 feet. Early blooming, grown more for foliage and backdrop for more colorful flowers. Very interesting foliage - show stopper in the MSU display garden.

■ *Eriarthus ravennae* (ravena grass), 9 to 12 feet. Tops 12 feet when the very showy blooms appear in late summer, carries well into winter.

■ *Molinia caerulea arundinacea* "Skyracer" (tall purple moor grass), 7 to 8 feet. Great specimen with big, airy flower heads over dramatic foliage. Combines well with other perennials. The straight species *M. caerulea* tend to be shorter.

Cameron suggests that no fertilizers be used, and to cut the grass back the last part of April to a short stubble. It is best to

buy named cultivars when possible.

Three outstanding Michigan gardeners will be featured on *A Gardener's Diary* on cable's HGTV, when host Erica Glasen visits them and their gardens. Each program will begin 4:30 p.m. on these Saturdays:

Jan. 20 - Don Crow, head gardener at the governor's mansion in Lansing.

March 3 - Betty Starley of Beverly Hills, artist and extraordinary gardener.

March 17 - Larry Mackle of Bloomfield Hills, daylily hybridizer plus. Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then 111, then 3445. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

## GARDENING CALENDAR

Does your garden club have an upcoming event or meeting you want publicized? Send items for consideration in *Gardening Calendar* to Ken Abramczyk, *Observer* Newspapers, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail k Abramczyk@oe. homecomm.net. To send a fax, call (734) 691-7279.

## GARDEN CLUBS

## FARMINGTON

Caroline Dana Lewis, founder of the Ann Arbor chapter of the Great Lakes Rhododendron Society, has more than 300 specimens in her yard. She will give a slide presentation and lecture at noon Monday, Feb. 5, at the Longacre House, located on the west side of Farmington Road between 10 Mile and 11 Mile roads. For information, call 476-3017.

## LIVONIA

Flower arranging, with an emphasis on petite designs, will be discussed at the next meeting of the Livonia Garden Club at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 6, at St. Andrew's Church. The speaker is Gretchen Pugsley, a flower show

judge, who is also a member of the Hill and Dale Garden Club of Farmington Hills. Visitors are welcome.

## WORKSHOP

## FLORAL DESIGN

Several workshops are scheduled at Keller & Stein Florist and Greenhouse, 42158 Michigan in Canton. Reservations are needed for the workshops. Each workshop costs \$10 per person, and is non-refundable. Classes are scheduled at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The classes include: poodle arrangement workshop, Saturday, Jan. 20; silk spring flower arrangement workshop, Saturday, Feb. 24, and herbal workshop, Saturday, March 17. Call (734) 397-0800.

## BACK TO SCHOOL

## MORE GARDENING

The Michigan School of Gardening, 29429 Six Mile, in Livonia offers a variety of subjects. Register in advance. Classes are limited in size. Here is a list of some of the classes:

Lawn Pest Management, 9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. Jan. 29. Identify and diagnose common diseases and pests of lawns. Learn management techniques and control strategies and lawn care without pesticides.

Other scheduled classes requiring prerequisite classes or experience include: Shade gardens, 9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. sessions, Thursdays, Feb. 8 and 15; Landscape Design, six morning sessions starting Tuesday, Feb. 20, and includes one Saturday, or seven evening sessions; Growing Vegetables, scheduled for three Wednesdays in mornings or evenings, starting Wednesday, Feb. 21.

Call (248) 4-GARDEN for information on fall and winter classes, times and costs or click on www.michigangardening.com

## HERBS AND PLANTS

## NEW PERSPECTIVES

Bodil Drescher Anya, a horticultural therapist master, will discuss "Starting a Program in Horticultural Therapy" at the 23rd annual conference of the Michigan Horticultural Therapy

Association Friday, March 9, at the Plant and Soil Sciences Building at Michigan State University. Anya has 22 years experience in establishing such programs. Sessions include Adaptive Gardening, HT with Seniors, HT with the severely physically disabled, hands-on craft workshops and other topics. Also featured are the annual Seedy Character contest, displays, exhibits and an optional tour of the Michigan State University Butterfly House. Registration is \$30 for MHTA members and \$40 for nonmembers if received before March 1. After that date, fees are \$45 for members and \$55 for others. Annual membership is \$15. A box lunch is available for \$6. For information, call Patrick Lewis at (616) 337-3300 or Cathy Leavay at (517) 655-4969.

## MATTHAEI GARDENS

## WINTER HIKER

Learn about Michigan plants and habitats. Field trips include hikes to little-known nature areas.

state land, University of Michigan property, or turn-of-the-century classic botanical localities. Share a potluck lunch. Winter is the perfect time of year to learn about trees, shrubs and plant identification. One class session will travel to southeastern Michigan sites within an hour of Ann Arbor. Another session will travel to Pellston to the University of Michigan Biological Station. (An intermediate level of cross country skiing will be helpful for this section. Depending on conditions, class will ski or hike.) Classes are scheduled three consecutive Saturdays, Jan. 27, Feb. 3 and 10 for the first session, and the second session is scheduled for an entire weekend, Feb. 23-25. Register at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 North Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. For information, call (734) 998-7063.

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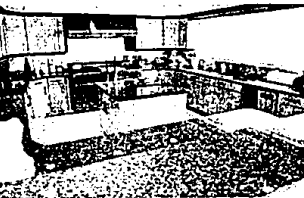
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