

Panicum virgatum - Growing Guide

Growing Panicum Virgatum

Switch grass

Panicum virgatum is a rhizomatous, perennial but deciduous grass from the USA which has an ornamental value in the herbaceous border. Its close relative, *Panicum miliaceum* or Millet, is a valuable fodder crop in agriculture and is widely used in wild bird seed mixtures.

P. virgatum 'Heavy Metal' has stiff, erect, flat, metallic blue-grey leaves which grow to around 3ft in height including its flowers. The leaves turn yellow in autumn and a light brown in winter when they go dormant. The flowers appear in early autumn in broad panicles of tiny purple-green spikelets.

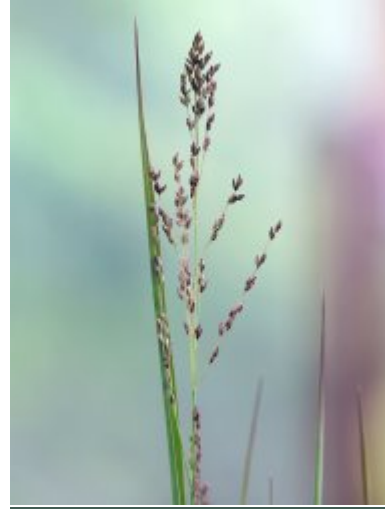
This plant should be grown in full sun to achieve a full flowering and the stems can be cut and dried for flower arranging. It is perfectly hardy and is most easily lifted and divided with a spade in spring just as they come into growth and are visible above the soil. Clumps can be up to 2ft across when mature so there is plenty of potential to create several new plants from a single clump. Alternatively the seed can be sown in the spring where it will germinate quickly and easily like most grasses.



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