Purple Tears Switch Grass

Panicum virgatum 'Purple Tears'



Purple Tears Switch Grass in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 3 feet

Flower Height: 4 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Spacing: 18 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3b

Description:

This impressive selection forms a narrow, upright clump of striking light green leaves; airy, gray colored plumes appear in mid-summer, followed by splendid purple seed heads; perfect as a landscape accent, or along borders

Ornamental Features

Purple Tears Switch Grass features airy plumes of gray flowers rising above the foliage from mid summer to mid fall. Its attractive grassy leaves are light green in color with hints of silvery blue. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of orange and red in the fall. The purple seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from late summer to mid fall. The tan stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Purple Tears Switch Grass is an herbaceous perennial grass with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cut back to the ground in late winter before active growth resumes. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Purple Tears Switch Grass is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

Purple Tears Switch Grass will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity extending to 4 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 24 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 18 inches apart. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under typical garden conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for alkaline soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.