



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Helictotrichon sempervirens*¹

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Introduction

Also known as *Avena sempervirens*, Blue Oat Grass is an perennial, ornamental grass that has attractive thin gray-green, or blue leaves (Fig. 1). Leaf blades grow to about 12 inches long and are ½ inch wide and taper to a fine point. Plants grow 18 to 30 inches tall. The glaucous foliage provides a welcomed contrast to a green border. Beige terminal panicles are produced in June through August, maturing to a light brown by the fall when they break apart and fall from the plant. Attractive, light brown, fall foliage color persists throughout the winter.

General Information

Scientific name: *Helictotrichon sempervirens*

Pronunciation: hel-lick-toe-TRICK-awn sem-pur-VYE-renz

Common name(s): Blue Oat Grass

Family: *Gramineae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: edging; ground cover; border

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

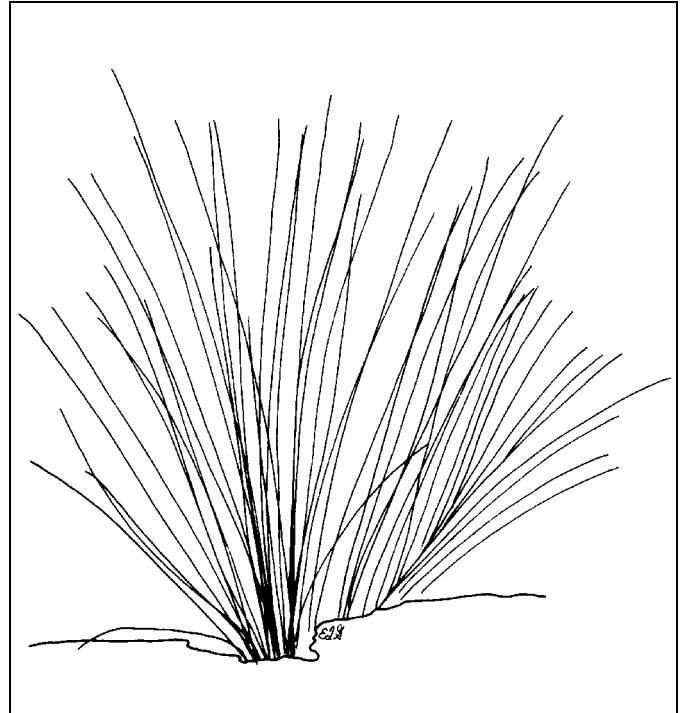


Figure 1. Blue Oat Grass.

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: blue or blue-green

Fall color: brown or tan

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: brown

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Blue Oat Grass is attractive as a single accent plant in a very small garden, or it can be massed in groups for a beautiful, fine-textured drift. Blue Oat Grass prefers a full sun exposure, but will tolerate light shade. It prefers a moist soil that is well-drained, however it will tolerate sandy as well as heavy clay soils. No more than yearly fertilization is needed to keep plants healthy. Propagate by division.

They are often planted about 2 feet apart so they form a solid mass of fine-textured foliage. Blue Oat Grass looks nice in a rock garden planted by itself, or more commonly in groups in front of a shrub border or in a row along a walk. They should last for many years with little care.

Pests and Diseases

Blue Oat Grass may be prone to foliar diseases when grown in shade.