

Plant Name: Pennisetum alopecuroides
Common Name: Chinese fountain grass 'Hameln'

Plant Type: Grass

Colour: purple-tinged spikelets in late summer

Height: 0.9m

Spread: 1.2m



Cutflower: Yes

Species Data (applies to all plants in this Plant Species)

The genus *Pennisetum* gives us several ornamental fountain grasses.

This one is the most commonly cultivated of the cold hardy species.

Chinese pennisetum is a perennial grass that grows in a slowly expanding clump, 2-4 ft (0.6-1.2 m) tall and just as wide.

It has narrow, linear leaves that are flat, 12-20 in (30.5-50.8 cm) long, less than 0.5 in (1.3 cm) wide, and slightly scabrous.

The arching mound of bright green foliage turns golden brown in winter.

The flower spikelets are borne in bristly yellowish to purplish cylinders to 8 in (20.3 cm) long.

They resemble bottle brushes, and are at their peak in summer and begin to disintegrate by early winter.

Many cultivars are available, with clumps ranging from less than 1 ft (0.3 m) to over 5ft (1.5 m) tall.

'Hameln' is small, with clumps less than 3 ft (0.9 m) tall, and produces creamy white flower clusters.

'Little Bunny' is only about a foot tall. 'Little Honey' is also only about 1 ft (0.3 m) tall and has white striped leaves.

'Moudry' has wider leaves and dark purple, almost black, foxtail flowers; it self-sows and can be invasive in adjacent flower beds and lawns.

'Paul's Giant' get 5 ft (1.5 m) tall and has light tan flowers.

Plant Data (applies to THIS plant only)

Preferred common name: Chinese fountain grass 'Hameln'

Pennisetum can be annual or perennial, evergreen or deciduous grasses, clump-forming or spreading in habit, with linear leaves and narrow flowering panicles with conspicuous bristles.

Hameln is a clump-forming perennial grass with arching linear leaves and cylindrical panicles of bristly, purple-tinged spikelets in late summer.

Pruning

Remove dead foliage and old flowered stems in spring.

Pests Generally pest free.

Diseases Generally disease free.

Soil Acid, Alkaline or Neutral. Moist but well-drained or well-drained. Chalk, Loam or Sand.

Aspect All aspects. Sheltered.

Propagation

Propagate by seed sown in containers in a warm glasshouse in spring or by division in spring.

Flowers: Pale Purple in Summer and Autumn.

Foliage: Yellow in Autumn.

Evergreen/Deciduous: Evergreen.

Suggested Plant Uses: Cottage/Informal Garden, Flower Arranging, Flowers Borders and Beds or Low Maintenance.
Pennisetum alopecuroides
Common Names: Chinese fountain grass, fountain grass, Chinese pennisetum, swamp foxtail
Family: Poaceae/Gramineae (grass Family)

Chinese fountain grass creates a dramatic effect when planted in breeze-rippled masses.

Description

The genus *Pennisetum* gives us several ornamental fountain grasses. This one is the most commonly cultivated of the cold hardy species. Chinese pennisetum is a perennial grass that grows in a slowly expanding clump, 2-4 ft (0.6-1.2 m) tall and just as wide. It has narrow, linear leaves that are flat, 12-20 in (30.5-50.8 cm) long, less than 0.5 in (1.3 cm) wide, and slightly scabrous. The arching mound of bright green foliage turns golden brown in winter. The flower spikelets are borne in bristly yellowish to purplish cylinders to 8 in (20.3 cm) long. They resemble bottle brushes, and are at their peak in summer and begin to disintegrate by early winter. Many cultivars are available, with clumps ranging from less than 1 ft (0.3 m) to over 5 ft (1.5 m) tall. 'Hameln' is small, with clumps less than 3 ft (0.9 m) tall, and produces creamy white flower clusters. 'Little Bunny' is only about a foot tall. 'Little Honey' is also only about 1 ft (0.3 m) tall and has white striped leaves. 'Moudry' has wider leaves and dark purple, almost black, foxtail flowers; it self-sows and can be invasive in adjacent flower beds and lawns. 'Paul's Giant' get 5 ft (1.5 m) tall and has light tan flowers.

Location

Chinese fountain grass is native from eastern Asia to western Australia. It has escaped cultivation and established in many areas including California and parts of the northeastern United States.

Culture

Cut back in early spring before new growth begins.

Light: Full sun is best but Chinese pennisetum can be grown in partial shade.

Moisture: Chinese fountain grass is moderately tolerant of drought, but does best with regular watering. It requires supplemental water in arid climates. This is actually a good grass for the edge of the water garden.

Propagation: Propagate cultivars of fountain grass by dividing the root clump in the dormant season.

Chinese fountain grass flower spikes vary in color from dark purple to light tan.

Usage

Chinese fountain grass is at its best in masses, especially borders. Plant at 3-4 ft (0.9-1.2 m) spacings. This grass is a graceful, fine-textured fountain of foliage and bristly bottlebrush flowers that adds interest and beauty most of the year. The dense, foxtail-like flower spikes are excellent in fresh arrangements, but they shatter in winter.

Features

The generic name, *Pennisetum*, is from the Latin words for feather and bristle and refers to the bristly inflorescence. Other popular fountain grasses are African fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*),

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oriental fountain grass (*P. orientale*) and 'Burgundy Giant' fountain grass (*P. macrostachium*).