

Feather Reed (Karl Foerster)

Calamagrostis x acutiflora

Karl Foerster grass is named for German nurseryman, who is one of the big names in the renaissance of ornamental grasses in the garden.

Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' is a cool season grower with dark green, shiny foliage that appears in early spring and lasts until late fall.

Flowers appear in June - earlier than many other ornamental grasses. At first, they are loose, feathery and pinkish in color, then, through the summer, they become very narrow, gradually turning a wheaten color that lasts through the fall. The flower stems grow bolt upright and stand up well through summer and winter.

How to grow *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

It grows best in moist, well-drained fertile soil, and does well in moist heavy clay soil.

You can easily propagate this grass by division, but the flowers are sterile so it can't be grown from seed. Fortunately, this means it is not invasive and will not seed itself ground. Like most ornamental grasses, Karl Foerster feather reed grass is easy to grow. It prefers full sun, but will take light shade, but too much shade causes it to flop a bit.

Annual maintenance consists of cutting the old growth down in early spring before new growth starts. We usually make the cut somewhere between 10 to 12 inches from the ground. K.F. grass grows out from the center, and after a few years, you may discover a hole-in-the-donut effect. When this happens, dig it up and divide it in spring.

'Karl Foerster' is called the "metamorphic grass." Others describe it as the "perpetual motion grass." The slightest breeze sets this grass in motion. The graceful movement is a highlight for any landscape. In a small garden, one or two clumps serve as good specimens or accents, especially when surrounded with lower-growing companions. Its upright narrow growth habit makes it a good tall grass for tight spaces. In larger spaces, Karl Foerster grass is a natural for mass planting.