



## ***Muhlenbergia***

These spectacular, non-invasive, ornamental clumping grasses are versatile and require very little maintenance. Muhlenbergias are native to the southwestern United States and northern Mexico at elevations of 2500' to 7000'. With over 125 species, this large and diverse group can be used as a vertical specimen or accent, a softening feature around boulders and contrasting desert plants, or a dense mass that is especially good on slopes for erosion control. The beauty of muhlenbergias are their whispering foliage that sways in gentle breezes. They provide seeds, cover, and nesting materials for wildlife. The common species range in height from 1 ½ to 5 feet and have a variety of seed head colors, textures and patterns. They bloom from August to November.

Muhlenbergias love full sun, but tolerate part shade, are tolerant of drought, heat and cold, and can handle most soil conditions including heavy clay, alkaline or salty soils. These perennial grasses survive on rainfall alone, but look better with some supplemental summer watering. They are typically dormant in the winter and look best if trimmed to the ground every two or three years. They have no known pests or problems. A few common and most spectacular species are described below.

### *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

#### **Pink Muhly**

Pink muhly has stunning, feathery, rust-colored flowers that arise gracefully up to 2 ½ feet above a 3 foot mound of dark green foliage. This perennial is evergreen in the low desert. After blooming in the fall, pink muhly becomes semi-dormant in the winter. It can be cut to the ground in February to allow uncluttered, fresh new growth. If planted on the east or west side, the morning or evening sun provides dramatic backlighting. Pink muhly can be used as a border, among boulders, in clusters to create a prairie effect, or as an accent. This species does not reseed, but mature clumps can be divided in the early spring.

### *Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*

#### **Lindheimer Muhly**

The beautiful, soft blue-green foliage and amber waves of flowers make Lindheimer muhly a great specimen plant. Lindheimer muhly looks good in poolside gardens, surrounding bare tree trunks, or amassed into a meadow. It is also effective in groups, mixed with other flowers such as verbena, or as a groundcover. Native to Texas and northern Mexico, it prefers rocky, calcareous (limestone) soils, but can tolerate heavy clay. The ¼ inch wide leaves arise from the base of the 5 foot clumps. The showy and persistent, graceful flower spikes arch 2 feet above and are golden amber in the fall and turn silvery-gray when mature. Flowers are stunning in fresh or dry arrangements. When dormant, the shape and color make it a nice accent in late winter. Leaves turn white after frost and stay that way until spring. They can be cut back in late winter if desired.

### *Muhlenbergia rigens*

#### **Deer Grass**

These dense clumps of narrow, bright green leaves grow to 4 feet tall and wide. Deer grass mixes well with boulders in dry creek beds, among subtropical plants, in a meadow, or mini-oasis. Native to the chaparral in the southwest and Mexico, it stays green even without summer water. Deer grass flowers in early fall with slender, leaning, tan flower stalks up to 6 feet tall and then fades to a graceful, fountain-like display of wispy white seed heads that swain in light breezes. Deer grass needs no fertilizer and very little water except in low desert summers. Trim back when dormant in winter for best appearance.