

VALE'S GREENHOUSE



Quality Plants For The Chinook Zone

301 – 3rd St. N.W., Black Diamond, Alberta

933-4814

PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR 2001

Calamagrostis x acutiflora “Karl Foerster” “Karl Foerster Feather Reed Grass”



Each year the Perennial Plant Association sends each member a ballot to select a Perennial Plant of the Year. These plants do not tend to be new introductions to the garden world, but plants that have been tried and thus proven worthy for nomination. After the selection, the plant is then promoted all across Canada and continental U.S.A. Here, in the Black Diamond and Calgary area, there have been years that the plant chosen has not been hardy to our Agricultural Zone of 2 or 3.

This hardy in USDA zone 2 grass is an outstanding example of “perpetual motion grass”. The slightest breeze sets this grass, which can reach up to 7 feet tall, in motion; thus the graceful movement is a highlight for any sunny landscape. The botanical name is from the Greek *Kalamos*, a reed and *agrostis*, a grass. This highly acclaimed cultivar is one of the most versatile, attractive and low maintenance of the ornamental perennial grasses.

Introduced to the general public in 1950 by Karl Foerster in his book “The Use of Grass and Ferns in the Garden”, he describes that the source of this plant was from the Hamburg Botanical garden. The Foerster Nursery, of Bornim Germany, owned by Mr Karl Foerster, however mentions this grass as early as 1939 their catalogue.

Deep green, shiny foliage of this cool season grass appears in early spring and lasts until early winter. Loose, feathery flower heads appear in July and are initially pink in colour. As the seed heads mature, they become a golden tan in colour, that last all through the fall season. It is an excellent specimen plant providing a vertical accent of the flower (Seed) heads, that last for months and because they are sterile this eliminates any chance of this cultivar becoming an invasive plant or creating unwanted seedlings in the garden.

“Karl Foerster Feather Reed Grass” thrives best in full sun, well-drained soils and will tolerate heavier clay soil in drier sites. Fertilizer may be required to produce its maximum height; low fertility soils will result in shorter plants. This ornamental grass is a cool-season grass, which allows planting, transplanting and division in spring or fall. For division use a sharp knife or shovel and simply cut large clumps into smaller clumps of 5–7 viable eyes. In southern Alberta, we can recommend that you leave this grass standing until March before you cut it down to take full advantage of its beautiful winter structure that it gives to the garden. It is understandable why this grass is one of the best-selling ornamental grasses year after year.

For more information on the Perennial Plant Association, and past Selections for the Perennial Plant of the Year, check their web site at www.perennialplant.org

For more information on the great plants Man, Karl Foerster check out this website:
www.uvm.edu/pss/ppp/kfoerst.htm