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Bring the prairies home to the East

Panicum virgatum are more commonly known as switch grasses and originally come from the prairies of the Midwest. These plants are warm-season growers that form upright clumps that reach from 3 to 7 feet. "Heavy Metal" has a tendency to grow at the low end of the height range. Its clumps can be 3 feet in spread. The clumps are often open and airy which make the plant ideal for grouping with plants having more solid clumps.

The clumps are topped by large open panicles of tiny purplish spikelets that give the look of a haze of color above the grass. The panicles are present in mid- to late winter.

"Heavy Metal" was the first of the blue forms to be selected and named. The leaves range in color from blue-grey in cooler climates to a richer blue in warmer zones to a purple in the hottest parts of the country. The foliage turns a warm yellow in the autumn.

Panicum virgatum in all its forms tolerate most soils but they prefer moist fertile soil. (If drainage is not good enough, they develop "yellow tip death" in which the tips of the leaves turn yellow and start decaying.) Their growing range extends from Florida to Canada and almost coast to coast.

Switchgrass reproduces both sexually and vegetatively. Rhizomes are responsible for vegetative expansion, but spreading ability depends upon growth form.

Switchgrass generally produces abundant seed. Natural stands often yield 100 pounds of seeds per acre, and cultivated stand may yield 300 to 500 pounds of seeds per acre. Seeds are shed in fall or winter and require winter dormancy before they germinate in the spring. Germination begins when soil temperatures reach 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

FACTOIDS

- Stiffly upright plant with grey-green coloration.

Common Name:

Switch Grass

Scientific Name:

***Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal'**

Stock Number:

P024

Category:

Ornamental Grass



Ornamental grass adds interest

Ornamental grasses are great plants for adding four-season interest to the perennial garden—they produce clumps of vertical or fountainlike foliage in spring, bloom in summer, set attractive seed heads and turn color in fall, and hold their form through the winter.

Besides providing forms and textures that work well with perennials,

ornamental grasses have two very desirable traits that make them valuable in perennial gardens: They catch the light, which seems to shine through the foliage and flower heads, making them glow; and they shimmer in the breeze, moving with every air current. Use these features to add visual and textural excitement to your perennial garden.

Planting	Spread Size	Soil	Sun	Feeding	Pruning
Propagation by division or seed.	H: 3' S: 3'	Fertile, well-drained soil.	Full sun to partial shade.		Cut back to 12" in the spring.