

Hameln Grass - *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'

'Hameln' is a dwarf form of fountain grass. A warm-season, deciduous perennial grass with dark green foliage and whitish flowers. However, this grass has great fall interest if left unpruned, hence this month's discussion. Flowers appear in July and continue through August, and hang around throughout the fall season.

With its attractive fountain-like flower displays, 'Hameln' is one of the best choices for smaller dry gardens and courtyards. Use it as foliage contrast and fall color with mixed perennials. This versatile grass looks great planted en masse or intermixed and contrasting with flowering perennials of fall color, succulents, or a myriad of other ornamental grasses. It shares cultural preferences with many favorite Southwestern native perennials in xeriscaped gardens. This grass is ideal for locations where larger grasses are not desired.

Plants (foliage and flowers) form an upright, mounding clump reaching a size of 2 to 3 feet tall. The leaves are slightly curved, 1/8 to 1/4 inch in width, and 1 to 1½ feet in length. The inflorescence of greenish white flowers mature to creamy tan of 1 to 2 inches wide and 3 to 4 inches long, and held above the foliage. 'Hameln' has an upright mounding growth habit and usually does not reseed itself. Make sure this grass is planted in a sunny location. It can tolerate alkaline, sandy, loam, or clay soils, as long as it's well-drained. As with other ornamental grasses, 'Hameln' is pest and disease resistant.

They capture sunlight and breezes, thus providing spectacular color and movement in the landscape, along pathways and spaced around rocks. 'Hameln' can provide an unusual tall groundcover to larger areas, medians, or will enhance a planting bed with a uniform appearance. Also great for planting next to smaller water gardens, where it won't overwhelm the scheme, and it's striking even in containers.

As the plant ages, the center can become open with stems originating along the margin, creating an open ring. To remedy this, divide the clumps and replant to rejuvenate. Propagate by division.

Interesting tidbits:

- 'Hameln' is the oldest cultivar of *Pennisetum alopecuroides*.
- Can be used in flower arrangements both fresh and dried. Most species are very frost hardy.

