



Photo: Missouri Botanical Garden

**Common Name:**

Switchgrass, tall panic grass

**Plant Type:**

Ornamental Grass

**Light Requirements:**

Full Sun

**Height:** 2.5-7 ft

(depending on variety)

**Bloom Time:** Summer-Fall

**Hardiness Zone:** 3-9

## **Panicum virgatum (Switchgrass)**

Switchgrass is a warm-season grass that is native to North America from Canada to Mexico. It is one of the dominant grasses of the tallgrass prairie which once covered areas of the Midwest. As a native grass, Switchgrass is a good replacement for invasive ornamental grasses such as Chinese Silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*).

Switchgrass grows best in full sun conditions. It tolerates both dry and moderately wet soils and can even thrive in occasional flooding. Because of its extensive root system, it is a great plant to assist with erosion control and stabilization of banks. It can also tolerate growing under Black Walnut Trees. Switchgrass grows in clumps, and spreads slowly by rhizomes.

Switchgrass blooms in mid-summer, with pink-tinged flower panicles that appear to hover over the foliage like a cloud. The foliage turns shades of yellow-orange in the fall, with leaves fading to light brown that will persist through winter. Switchgrass is a host plant for several butterfly species, and the seeds can provide supplemental forage for birds in winter. Cut back foliage in late winter or early spring to make way for the fresh growth.

References:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org>

<https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/grasses/tables/table41.html>

<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2020/09/20/native-plant-profile-switchgrass-panicum-virgatum/>