Chameleon Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium 'Chameleon'

Height: 3 feet

Spread: 20 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 4

Description:

This eye-catching selection forms a columnar clump of green and white striped foliage in spring and early summer changing to pink-purple in late summer to autumn; burgundy-red flowers in fall; perfect as a landscape accent, or along borders



Chameleon Little Bluestem foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Chameleon Little Bluestem features airy plumes of burgundy flowers with red overtones rising above the foliage from early to late fall. Its attractive grassy leaves are green in color with prominent white stripes and tinges of rose. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of burgundy and in the fall. The dark red seed heads are carried on showy plumes displayed in abundance from mid fall to early winter.



Chameleon Little Bluestem foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Chameleon Little Bluestem is an herbaceous perennial grass with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cut back to the ground in late winter before active growth resumes. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Chameleon Little Bluestem is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Chameleon Little Bluestem will grow to be about 30 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 20 inches. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under typical garden conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for alkaline soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.

Chameleon Little Bluestem is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.