Insert as an Additional Taxa For *Miscanthus sinensis*.

**Panicum virgatum** L.

Switch Grass

*C Panicum virgatum* is also known as Panic Grass; Switch Grass is a common native grass over much of the U.S., Southern Canada, and Northern Mexico; Switch Grass is a common component of our native tallgrass prairies; it is found in both wet and dry soils, with genotypes from wet soils tending to be larger and more robust; clumps vary from upright oval to rounded in youth, and usually tend more toward a rounded habit with age; this perennial warm season grass varies from 3 to 9 tall and 3 to 5 or more wide; older stems can appear almost cane-like; the slender leaves are lanceolate and nearly strap-like; summer foliage is a rich green to blue-green coloration and fall foliage may sometimes develop yellow-brown, orange-brown or a strong reddish bronze color; stems remain erect late into the season providing a brown to beige accent in winter landscapes; in late spring to summer, plants produce large airy panicles of off-white to light pink flowers that mature 12 to 16 above the foliage; the fine textured flowers contrast nicely with the coarser textured foliage; seed heads may provide interest into the late fall and winter.

C The foliage is moderately coarse textured for a grass, particularly on the larger cultivars; plants sway in the wind adding motion to the design; in recent years a variety of forms have been selected and cultivars are available with blue-green foliage, reddish foliage, improved fall color and a range of mature heights; for instance, ‘Shenandoah’ has red foliage, particularly in late summer and fall; ‘Dallas Blues’ is a mid-size selection with blue-green leaves; ‘Heavy Metal’ was perhaps the first mainstream U.S. nursery industry cultivar from this species and it offers handsome metallic blue-green leaves, upright growth habit, and attractive seed heads; cultivars vary substantially in their tendency to reseed and become weedy, so check with local nurserymen and landscape professionals for selections for your local conditions; see Brand (2005) for a good discussion of cultivars available in the U.S. nursery trade.

C This species is widely adapted to USDA zones 4(3) to 9 landscapes; in fact in some instances it is too well adapted and may become a serious weed problem; in addition to self-seeding, plants can form colonies via the scaly rhizomes that may appear over time; although tolerant of wet or dry soils, perhaps the best use of *P. virgatum* is for naturalizing along drainage swales where it can be allowed to colonize a large area; bloom is reduced and rust diseases can become problematic with excess shade.

C Brand (2005) suggests the red foliage forms of *P. virgatum* as a native substitute for the non-native Japanese Bloodgrass (*Imperata cylindrica* var. *koenigii* ‘Red Baron’); there have also been concerns about the tendencies of the introduced *Miscanthus spp.* to naturalize and become potentially invasive in some portions of the country; *Panicum virgatum* may offer a similar appearance as some of the larger cultivars of *Miscanthus sinensis*, while the red foliage forms might also be used as a native substitute for Purple Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*); old foliage of *P. virgatum* should be pruned back in winter or early spring to allow vigorous new growth the next season.

C The genus name derives from the Latin name for millet, while the specific epithet means wand-like or twiggy.

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