



Fact Sheet

Ornamental Grasses For Dry Areas



There are many attractive ornamental grasses that thrive in dry conditions, whether they be in coastal areas or merely suburban gardens experiencing water restrictions during the dry summers. These grasses require perfect drainage and little or no maintenance once established. Many of these plants have stunning flowers, and superb effects can be achieved when designing and planting a 'dry' garden.

***Festuca glauca* (varieties) 'Blue Fescue'**

Native to Southern France, *Festuca* is a hardy and attractive ornamental grass. Forming distinctive clumps, *Festuca* will grow to a height and spread of about 30cm. Forming neat mounds the foliage consists of narrow leaves that range in colour from silvery-white to blue/grey.

Festuca performs best in full sun and sharply drained soil and so will withstand dry conditions. Benefitting from being cut back in late winter, *Festuca* also benefits from being renewed every 4 or 5 years, by division. *Festuca* makes a stunning addition to dry areas of the garden whether planted en masse or used as a contrast to other grasses.

***Lomandra longifolia* 'Honey Reed'**

Native to coastal areas of Eastern Australia, *Lomandra* can be described as almost indestructible. *Lomandra* grows to about 1m in height and will form a dense tussock of about 1.2m wide. Foliage is eye-catching, lush green, strap like leaves that have a semi weeping habit. Growing best in full sun and very well drained soil, *Lomandra* is maintenance free once established. Suited to large scale mass planting, *Lomandra* also makes a great specimen plant among smaller growing grasses.



***Themeda* Species**

Native to Japan and Australia, depending on the variety, *Themeda* is an extremely hardy ornamental grass. *Themeda* will grow to a height of nearly 1.5m, forming strict clumps of delicate leafy stems radiating from the base. The narrow bright green leaves turn to intense shades of golden orange in winter, in *Themeda triandra*. *Themeda australis* produces purple tonings in winter.

Growing best in full sun, *Themeda* is hardy in a range of soils & extremely drought tolerant once established. Excellent for mass planting, *Themeda* also makes a nice contrast to coarser foliage such as *Lomandra*.

Anigozanthos Spp. 'Kangaroo Paw'

Native to South Western Australia, Anigozanthos is a stunning addition to any 'dry' garden. Gaining in popularity there are now many new varieties becoming available, the best being the 'Bush Gems' series that are being bred to be more resistant to ink disease (the main problem with Anigozanthos, where the foliage goes black).

Depending on the variety, heights vary from 30cm up to 1.5m tall. The foliage is attractive lush green, fleshy strap like leaves. The main attraction of the Anigozanthos are the unique and stunning flowers that resemble an animals paw and come in a range of colours including oranges, reds, golds and even an iridescent green. The flowers are very attractive to honey eaters and are also superb as a cut flower. Requiring full sun, warmth and very well drained sandy or gravelly soil, Anigozanthos prefers an open position in the garden.

Although tolerant of drought, flowering is prolonged by summer watering. Foliage may also be needed to be protected from snails which can strip younger leaves. Stunning effects are achieved when Kangaroo Paws are planted en masse, where their flowers can be enjoyed over a long period.

Dianella Spp 'Flax Lily'



Native to Australia and New Zealand, Dianella is an outstanding plant. There are a number of varieties in cultivation including *Dianella caerulea* and *D. tasmanica* (the species native to Tassie).

Evergreen and clump forming, height varies from about 30cm to 1m. Foliage is generally coarse and strap-like, with a floppy habit. In spring and summer Dianella produces flowers on tall branching sprays with colour ranging from white to purple-blue, and blue and yellow.

Flowers are then followed by glossy deep purple berries, making for a long lasting and stunning display in the garden. Hardy in a wide range of conditions, Dianella does best in sun or part shade, with moderately fertile soil and good drainage. Dianella is drought hardy once established and is an attractive and interesting addition to either an ornamental grass garden or a native garden.

Poa labillardieri 'Large Tussock Grass'

Native to Australia, this species of Poa is extremely hardy and adaptable to a wide range of conditions. Poa grows to a height of about 80cm and forms a similarly sized tussock. Foliage is narrow and feathery and pale green-grey in colour. Preferring full sun, Poa is easily grown and requires little attention once established.

Growing best in well drained soil, Poa is very tolerant of extended dry periods, but will also tolerate temporary wet conditions. Poa looks fantastic when planted en masse or when used as a 'filler' with plants such as Kangaroo Paws.

In addition to these grasses that are hardy in dry conditions, and the grasses in Stoneman's Fact Sheet Ornamental Grasses – For Wet Areas, there are a number of ornamental grasses that are extremely adaptable and will tolerate a wide range of conditions once established.

Some of these include:

- Koeleria glauca*** - a small growing, soft grey foliated grass;
- Liriope gigantean*** - a moderately tall plant with lush green strap like foliage and tall spikes of mauve and white flowers;
- Sisyrinchium angustifolium*** - a low growing plant with grass like foliage and pretty blue flowers;
- Phormium species*** - the flax plants ranging in height and varying with colours of the strappy leaves ranging from creams to greens to purple and copper reds; and
- Dietes Species*** - attractive strappy foliated plants that bear pretty iris-like flowers in cream or yellow.

