

Plume Grass *Saccharum ravennae*

BY CHERI STRINGER

One of the most challenging elements of creating a planting theme with multi-season interest is creating planting combinations that allow for color, texture, and form late in the season. This is especially difficult in the neverland of September to November, when scarecrows and spider webs start spontaneously appearing in neighborhoods overnight. Over the years I have incorporated many stars into the fall garden, but one of my favorite performers is plume grass (*Saccharum ravennae*).

Towering as high as 14 feet at maturity in early October, plume grass begins the season quietly growing behind spring-blooming plants, where it serves as a contrasting backdrop of color and texture with its wide-bladed leaves. During the fall months this garden gem creates striking landscape profiles, frames entrances, draws attention to corners, and provides a commanding vertical element that pairs nicely with horizontal lines. In winter, its strong stalks stand towering over mounds of snow while its seed heads remain intact like a sculpture.

I often find myself pairing plume grass with *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'. *Artemisia* is an unsung hero of the garden, acting as the foil that allows the color and texture of blooming perennials, shrubs, and grasses to shine. Its lacy silver-green foliage invites you to feel its soft, cotton-like texture while its attractive mounding form works as filler in between groundcovers and taller perennials and shrubs. From its emergence in spring until its fluffy fullness in late autumn, *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' pulls a mixed border together. 🌿



Cheri Stringer, owner/principal behind **TLC Gardens** has been designing and building landscapes since 1999. TLC gardens works with architects, engineers, city planners and professional builders on landscape renovation for both residential and commercial projects throughout Colorado. Their goal is to reconnect clients with nature, either by integrating elegant outdoor spaces or by upscaling commercial properties with areas for people to reflect and engage with the natural world.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHERI STRINGER

USDA HARDINESS
ZONES: 5-10

SIZE: 8-10' H x 4' W

CULTURAL
REQUIREMENTS:

Full sun to partial shade
(needs a full half-day
of sun). Low water,
performs best in
average, well-drained
soil.

