

Aztec Grass

Liriope muscari

This densely clumping, evergreen, grasslike perennial is quite attractive when grouped in a mass as a groundcover. Spreading by underground rhizomes, Lilyturf quickly creates a 12-inch-tall, dark green mat, accented by attractive spikes of lilac purple blooms.

Although frequently used as an edging, it is difficult to maintain it this way because of the spreading growth habit. 'Evergreen Giant' Liriope would be a better choice for an edging because it spreads very slowly.



General Information

Pronunciation: luh-RYE-oh-pee mus-KAR-ree

Common name(s): Lilyturf, Liriope, Border Grass

Family: Liliaceae

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; edging; naturalizing; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Fruit characteristic: showy

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Leaf margin: entire Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Leaf shape: linear Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: lilac, purple

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: black

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Preferring shade but tolerant of full sun (except in the hottest regions of the Lower South), Lilyturf establishes itself quickly on rich, moist, well-drained soils but will tolerate less suitable conditions. No more than four to six hours of full sun is recommended in USDA hardiness zones 9 to 11. Lilyturf should be fertilized once each spring but requires little care otherwise. Plant on 8 to 10-inch centers for quick establishment. Once established, Lilyturf will require irrigation only during the severest drought. Mow it once each year during late winter to get rid of last year's declining foliage. Cultivars are available with variegated foliage, white and various shades of purple blooms. Grandiflora' has light lavender flowers; 'Majestic' has violet flowers; 'Munroe White', white flowers; and 'Variegata' has yellow-striped leaves, maturing to green, and dark violet flowers. Blooms on several of the cultivars are quite striking. Liriope spicata is slightly shorter and spreads much quicker by means of rhizomes. It makes a good companion ground cover to plant around fast growing shrubs since root competition helps check the growth of the shrub. Less pruning would be required on shrubs planted in the ground cover. Propagation is by division of the clumps or by seed. Problems include mites, slugs, snails, and scale. None except mites are usually of any consequence.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

by Edward F. Gilman