

Eragrostis spectabilis Purple Lovegrass

Eragrostis spectabilis (Purple Lovegrass) is a warm season, native perennial grass which forms a petite mound with a magnificent changing display of texture and colors. In the spring, *Eragrostis spectabilis* emerges as a tidy, short mound of blue-green blades. Purple Lovegrass is most popular for the airy haze of reddish-mauve flowers which hover 1.5-2' tall from July to September. The fall brings a bronze and red coloring to blades, while the seeds shift to a gentle beige color. This hardy grass does well in poor, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade and it is very drought tolerant. Purple Lovegrass is sensitive to winter root rot, so well-drained soil is essential. It is native to open, sandy prairies, so it flourishes in poor sandy or gravel soils. Its slow spreading nature allows it to compete well against weedy plants. It can be used as an accent or massed as groundcover, and it attracts native wildlife such as butterflies and birds.

Botanical Name: *Eragrostis spectabilis*

Common Name: Purple Lovegrass

Family: Poaceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 5 to 9

Light Type: Full Sun to Part Shade

Soil Type: Loam, Sand

Soil Preferences: Must have well-drained soil; sensitive to poorly-drained clay

Soil Moisture: Dry to Medium

Typical height (ft): 1.5'-2'

Typical width (ft): 2-3'

Foliage: Green to blue green leaves

Bloom Time: July, August, September

Bloom: Pink, red-purple

Ecological features: host plant for Zabulon Skipper caterpillars; songbirds eat the seeds in fall and winter; erosion control

Tolerance of: Drought, deer, salt

Additional notes: sprays of tiny flowers resemble a haze of smoke; warm-season grass; short-lived, spreads by seed and rhizomes.

Companion plants: White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*), Wild Petunia (*Ruellia humilis*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*), Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*).

For more information see:

<http://www.newmoonnursery.com/plant/Eragrostis-spectabilis>

<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/grass-sedge-rush/purple-lovegrass>

https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/grasses/plants/pp_lovegrass.htm

<https://www.midwestgroundcovers.com/plant/Eragrostis-spectabilis-NGN>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/foliage/purple-love-grass/care-of-purple-love-grass.htm>

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=ersp

Images of *Eragrostis spectabilis*



Eragrostis_spectabilis_7zz.jpg

Green leaves in spring



Eragrostis_spectabilis_4zz.jpg

Purple haze of blooming inflorescences



Eragrostis_spectabilis.jpg

Fuzzy, dry seedhead



Eragrostis_spectabilis_kz1.jpg

Grass in November

Image choices for narrative:

First Choice:

Eragrostis_spectabilis_4zz.jpg

Purple haze of blooming inflorescences

Second Choice:

Eragrostis_spectabilis.jpg

Fuzzy, dry seedhead