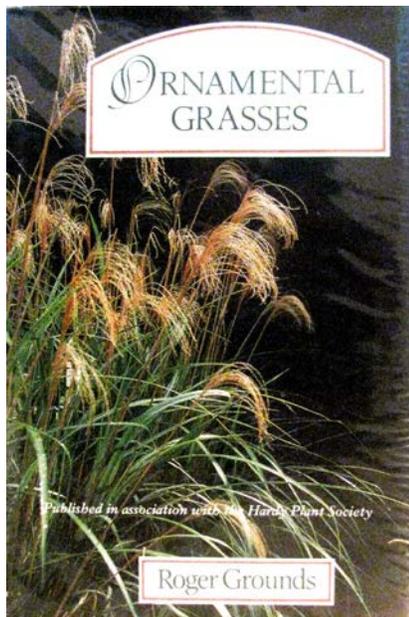


Book Review (Margaret Hodgson)



Ornamental Grasses by Roger Grounds
Christopher Helm (Publishers) Ltd. Imperial
House, Bromley, Kent, England, 1989
232 pages, approx. 20 plates colour photos, 35
black and white figures, Appendix 1 *Hardiness
Zone Map*, Appendix 2 *Conversion Tables*,
Appendix 3 *Suppliers Index*, Glossary, Index
of Plant Names, Hardbound,
ISBN 0-929050-87-8(hardcover)

Roger Grounds is the author of many books on gardening subjects. He has a garden design and consulting practice with a small nursery, specializing in grasses, at Lymington, Hampshire, England. The following is but a small indication of his prolific authorship of many gardening books: *Practical Pruning*, *Trees for Smaller Gardens*, *White Garden*, *Fresh From the Garden*, *Small Garden*, *Grasses: Choosing and Using These Ornamental Plants In the Garden*, *Ferns*, *The 2 Hour Garden*, *The private Life of Plants*, *Plantfinder's Guide to Ornamental Grasses*, *The Natural Garden*, *Growing Vegetables and Herbs*.

The author points out at the beginning of his book that ornamental grasses are fast becoming the most fashionable group of hardy plants. They are easy to cultivate and are at home in mixed borders or in large broad

plantings on their own. Grasses have a grace and beauty as well as diversity of size, form and habit that makes them suitable for a great variety of ornamental garden uses. They range from miniatures to shrub size giants and also from invasive ground-covering grasses to non-invasive grasses that are very elegant in borders. Some fit into rock gardens, others in bog gardens, some love hot dry conditions, others love to have wet feet, some are woodland plants, others meadow grasses.

Grounds has organized his book to introduce the reader to the vast diversity of grasses right in his introductory chapter and follows quickly with the garden uses of grasses in Chapter Two. He suggests looking at the "lawn" through new eyes. Problem areas usually appear under the trees and Grounds' solution is to plant woodrushes as they are natives of woodlands and so enjoy these conditions. He also suggests replacing heavy traffic areas with stepping stones and using blue grass in the area adjacent to heavy traffic volume. Or plant a whole multi-coloured lawn. In Chapter Three the author discusses in detail the cultivation of grasses, following this up with a chapter on arrangements of dry grasses in floral design when dried. An entire chapter (5) is devoted to the structure and identification of grasses with much description and many colour plates. The author has devoted an entire chapter (6) to Bamboos which he sees as an essentially distinct and cohesive group within the grasses. He points out that bamboos may be herbs, shrubs, trees or climbers and include few distinctly odd genera. It is generally accepted that bamboos were, in evolutionary terms, the forerunners of the modern grasses; they evolved as forest plants, they gradually adapted themselves to aquatic and forest margin habits, but have failed to adapt to grassland habits. They seem to need the moister, shadier conditions associated with the forest. Chapter Seven – Sedges are lumped together with grasses, but are very different ancient plants, separated by millions of years in evolutionary terms, grasses being the most modern of plants. This chapter spells out the main characteristics of sedges in full detail. Chapter Eight describes the various rushes and Chapter Nine deals with cat-tails. The book has an excellent index.