

**ORNAMENTAL GRASSES OR DRIED FLOWERS
FOR HOLIDAY DECORATING**

Variation #1: With Ornamental Grasses
Variation #2: With Dried Flowers



OBJECTIVE(S):

1. Educational Components

Participants will be provided information about various ornamental grasses and their light/temperature requirements. Discussion will be done regarding grass varieties better suited to Arkansas since Arkansas can include both types.

2. Activity

Variation #1:

Participants will create a dried ornamental grass arrangement.

Variation #2:

Participants will create a dried flower arrangement.

HANDOUT #1: DRYING ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

OBJECTIVES: *(Continued)*

3. Take Away

Variation #1:

Participants will take their vases of dried ornamental grass arrangements with them to their rooms.

Variation #2:

Participants will take their containers of dried flower arrangements with them to their rooms.

MATERIALS:

(Plan for 8 patients. Eight is supposed to be the maximum, but sometimes we get 10.)

_____ Pens

_____ Markers

_____ Name tags for patients (check BRI supply cabinet)

_____ Example of completed project you're doing

_____ An extra set of the patient project materials listed below in order for you to demonstrate the project

_____ TWO completed presentation forms (1 to BRI and 1 mailed to Ext. office)

_____ Your clean receipts for materials purchased (give to BRI therapists)

SPECIFIC ITEMS NEEDED for this project

- **For Variation #1 (Ornamental grasses)** Variety of ornamental grasses, pussy willow branches, colored leaves, tree bark, dried seed pods
- Containers: vases or pots, carved out pumpkins or plastic trick-or-treat pumpkins, etc.
- 24-gauge craft wire or floral tape
- Wire cutters if using wire, scissors if using floral tape
- 1 bag small river rock
- Seasonal accents—dried berry stems, silk butterflies, etc., small, speckled eggs from craft store, driftwood, acorns, etc.
- Optional, sea shells, battery-powered tea lights
- Hairspray, inexpensive aerosol
- *Optional: Clear lacquer spray, watercolors and fabric dyes*

SPECIFIC MATERIALS needed for this project *(Continued)*

HANDOUT #1: DRYING ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

- **For Variation #2 (Dried Flowers)** Variety of large and medium-sized dried flowers (Dried seed pods, and pussy willow branches are also options).
- Fern cuttings
- Flax cuttings
- Containers: vases
- Floral tape
- Tray
- Foam
- Lining material for inside the vases, such as lavender or straw
- Seasonal accents—dried berries, silk butterflies, etc.
- Hairspray, inexpensive aerosol

POWERPOINT OR PREZI OF PRESENTATION AVAILABLE? NO

HANDOUTS (Only for Variation #1-Ornamental Grasses):

- 1) *“How to Dry Ornamental Grasses”*
- 2) *“Top Ornamental Grasses”*
- 3) *“Ornamental Grasses for Shaded Areas: Pictures and Information”*

BEFORE CLASS (No time during class.)

Collect large variety of cuttings, and dry them if they are not already dried.

For Variation #1:

Ornamental grasses-dried, seed, or plant (ex. dried fountain grass bundles or pussy willow branches). Recommend also a large variety of leaves, tree bark, dried seed pods, dried flowers.

Optional: Grasses that have lost their vibrancy may be sprayed with a clear lacquer to bring them back to life.

Optional: Dying grasses with watercolors and fabric dyes may also be done after grasses have dried.

For Variation #2:

Large and medium-sized dried flowers, ferns and flax (Dried seed pods, and pussy willow branches are also options).

DURING CLASS

Variation #1: Ornamental Grass Arrangement

1. Polish the tall cylindrical vase to remove fingerprints and smudges.
2. Grasp a thick bundle of fountain grass and one or two dried pussy willow branches. Arrange them neatly and use the craft wire/floral tape to bundle them together near the base.

DURING CLASS - Variation #1 (Continued)

3. Place the bundle into the vase and hold it off to one side as you gently pour in small river rock. Tilt and rotate the vase as you pour until it's filled in with the river rock on all sides with the grass in the middle. Fill the vase one-third full of rock. ***Tilt the vase and pour the river rock gently to avoid cracking the glass.***
4. Gently maneuver the grass to one side to allow you to drop in small seasonal accents -- small, speckled eggs from the craft store, driftwood, acorns or faux red berries. Add only one or two small accents to allow the grass to take center stage.
5. Fluff and position the grasses to create an appealing arrangement.
6. Wire several small silk butterflies to the tips of the grasses; these can be removed and replaced as the seasons change. Add a colorful leaf here and there for fall and dried berry stems for Christmas.
7. To prevent shedding, give arrangement a light dusting of inexpensive aerosol hairspray.

Tip Substitute sand, gravel or decorative vase filler for the river rock and drop in a battery-powered tea light hidden behind a seashell to give your arrangement a romantic glow.

DURING CLASS

Variation #2: Dried Flower Arrangement

- Fix your vase using floral clay on a tray that you can turn. This is to help you check out the flower arrangements from all sides.
- Force a piece of foam into the vase. Line material such as lavender and straw may be used in order to fix the total appearance.
- Insert the bigger focal flowers like hydrangea first, followed by average-sized flowers like dried roses. Space the flowers uniformly all through.
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- *(More continued)*
- **DURING CLASS Variation #2: Dried Flower Arrangement (Continued)**
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HANDOUT #1: DRYING ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

- Add supplementary line material to give an emphasis to the overall shape. Fill up vacant spaces using fern and add flax for creating an appearance of completeness.
- To prevent shedding, give arrangement a light dusting of inexpensive aerosol hairspray

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS for ornamental grasses:

An ornamental grass is defined as an annual or perennial grass plant valued for its texture and color in the landscape. Ornamental landscaping serves the primary purpose of adding visually pleasing plants to the landscape. In contrast, some gardens are established with the purpose of providing food, shade or a privacy screen from neighbors. While plants used in an ornamental landscape may serve other purposes as well, the reasons for their selection in an ornamental landscape are their visual qualities and decorative effect. Any grass-like plant that is grown in a landscape with perennials and shrubs can be considered an ornamental grass. Ornamental grasses can add intriguing color and texture to the landscape. Many ornamental grass species are increasing in popularity because of their low maintenance requirements and limited water use. With the variety of shapes and colors available, these grasses make a nice accent for ornamental landscapes and are encouraged for use as a substitute for the traditional turf lawn. Along with true grasses (Poaceae), several other families of grass-like plants are typically marketed as ornamental grasses. These include the sedges (Cyperaceae), rushes (Juncaceae), restios (Restionaceae), and cat-tails.

As gardeners have discovered the beautiful structure, admirable hardiness, and unique colors of ornamental grasses, these plants have jumped into the limelight. There are many options when it comes to ornamental grasses, but a few key points will help you choose and care for them. We break it down with this ornamental grass primer.

Ornamental Grass Plant Basics

Most grasses prefer a sunny, well-drained spot and are at least moderately drought tolerant. Spring is a good time to plant, but autumn is, too, and garden centers often stock lots of grasses in fall, so it's a good time to shop for them. In general, deer and other pests don't like them, so they are considered low-maintenance.

Ornamental Grass Types

Ornamental grasses are generally divided into two types: clump-forming and running. Clump-forming grasses stay fairly tidy and are easy to control. Running grasses are a different story: They generally should be planted using a bottomless pot in order to keep them from taking over. Ornamental grasses also may be dwarf and tightly mounded or more loose and open.

Uses for Ornamental Grass Plants

Grasses are fantastic plants for beds and borders. Their interesting texture contrasts nicely with

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS for ornamental grasses: (Continued)

other plants, and the movement they produce when the wind blows adds energy to every design. Grasses are also excellent container plants for the same reasons. Grow them in pots all season, then plant perennial types (which most of them are) in the ground in autumn.

HANDOUT #1: DRYING ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

The prime time for most ornamental grasses is autumn, when the seed heads mature, but don't cut them down after the first freeze. They will stay standing for many weeks yet, making them stars of the winter garden.

Ornamental Grass Maintenance

Once established, most ornamental grasses need little care. Average water and drainage is adequate for most types. Cut down the dead stalks in late winter or early spring.

Every three or four years, ornamental grasses should be divided, especially those that form a doughnut shape, with a dead center (such as maiden grass). This helps the plants stay healthy and vigorous and also allows you to spread around your favorite ornamental grasses. Use a spade to cut down through the grass clump and lift out a section that includes both shoots and roots. Plant the new portion, and fill the hole in the old spot with soil and compost.

SOURCES

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Wilson Nurseries & Landscape Supply. (n.d.) Deschampsia (tufted hair grass) Caespitosa 'Northern Lights' (tufted hair grass). Retrieved April 22, 2018, from <https://www.wilsonnurseries.com/plants/tufted-hair-grass/> (Photo)

HOW TO DRY ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Hang Them Upside Down

Before drying any grasses, make sure that they are mature, fully developed, and stable. One of the simplest and oldest methods of drying grasses is to hang them upside down. This method can be used for most species of non-woody grasses so that they will remain upright after drying. Any leaves that will not be satisfactorily preserved during the drying process should be stripped away. Tie several stalks of grass together in small bunches and dry them in a well-ventilated location. Good air circulation is very important to the successful drying of grasses (or any other plants). The faster they dry, the fresher their colors will be.

Drying Grasses Standing Up

Plants with woody stalks, such as pampas grass, are better dried standing upright in a large container. This method has the advantage of preserving the gentle swaying quality of the grasses. If they were hung upside down to dry, the stalks would become stiff and lose their graceful arching.

Designing an Arrangement

To create a balanced impression with a floral centerpiece, make the height of the arrangement 2 to 3 times the diameter of the bowl. Roots, branches, and tree fungi can be included with grasses and flowers to provide additional design elements. Tree bark makes a good foundation for a centerpiece arrangement.

Grasses and Leaves

Leaves can be used to create attractive dried arrangements. Especially in their autumn colors, leaves can be effectively combined with grasses to bring a warm feeling of fall to a living room or dining room. To preserve leaves, place them between 2 pieces of waxed paper and sandwich them between 2 sheets of paper toweling; go over the leaves several times with a hot iron. The heat of the iron will cause a fine coating of protective wax to be transferred from the waxed paper to both sides of the leaves.

Some Helpful Hints for Drying Grasses

HANDOUT #1: DRYING ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

If you want to create an arrangement with dried grasses but the grasses do not have the desired shape, hold them over steaming hot water and carefully bend them into the shape you want.

If the grasses are still a little dusty before they are to be used in the arrangement, you can rinse them off with water if you do it quickly. Of course, they will then have to be allowed to dry.

Grasses that have lost their vibrancy can be brought back to life if they are sprayed with a clear lacquer.

Grasses can be dyed after they have been dried. Watercolors and fabric dyes can be used for that purpose.

TOP ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*): Blue fescue is a mound-forming ornamental grass that works well along edges or as a groundcover. Thrives in heat and sun, drought tolerant, must have excellent drainage. Hardy in Zones 4-8.

Reedgrass (*Calamagrostis*): This narrow, upright grass reaches 3-4 feet tall. It's an excellent companion in mixed borders. Zones 5-9.

Dwarf fountaingrass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*): With fuzzy foxtail flower spikes, dwarf fountaingrass is a perennial favorite that reaches about 2–3 feet tall. Hardy in Zones 6-9.

Purple fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceum*): A staple of container gardens because of its purple foliage and seed heads, this grass is usually used as an annual; it's hardy only in Zones 9-10.

Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*): A graceful, finely textured grass. It grows as a low, loose, open mound, making it a great edging plant, as well as a ground cover. Zones 3-9.

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*): One of the most colorful and tough grasses in the garden, switchgrass comes in blue (Heavy Metal) and purplish varieties (such as Shenandoah), among others. Zones 5-9.

Japanese forestgrass (*Hakonechloa macra aureola*): This lovely chartreuse-striped grass is one of the few that thrives in shade. Zones 5-9.

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES FOR SHADED AREAS: PICTURES AND INFORMATION

While most ornamental grasses prefer and do best in full sun locations, there are a number of grasses and grass-like plants that will provide interest to shaded areas in the garden.



Tufted Hair Grass - *Deschampsia cespitosa*

Height: 2-3 feet.

Width: 2-3 feet.

Bloom: silky green, May-June, maturing to yellow/gold/bronze.

Notes: Dark green clump forming grass. Yellow to bronze fall color. Silky green flower panicles in spring. Best in moist partial shade.



Japanese Forest Grass - *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'

Height: 12-18 inches.

Width: 18-24 inches.

Bloom: insignificant green, July-August.

Notes: Elegant arching clumps of lime green foliage. Reddish fall color. Slow growing. Best in part shade.



Fall Blooming Reed Grass - *Calamagrostis arundinacea*

Height: 3-4 feet.

Width: 2-3 feet.

Bloom: none.

Notes: Upright clump forming grass. Pink flower plumes in late summer early fall. Best in part shade.



Sedges - *Carex* sp.

Height: 3 inches - 3 feet.

Width: 6-24 inches.

Bloom: Depends on species. Some have attractive bloom June-August.

Notes: Numerous useful species offering interesting foliage coloration. Some are clump forming, some spread readily. Tolerant also of moist to wet conditions. Best in part to full shade.

HANDOUT #3: ORNAMENTAL GRASSES FOR SHADE



Creeping Lilyturf - *Liriope spicata*

Height: 6-12 inches.

Width: 18-36 inches.

Bloom: Purple, Aug-Sept.

Cultivars: 'Royal Purple', 'Big Blue'.

Notes: Mounds of leathery foliage. Aggressive spreader. Flowers followed by black berries. Best in part to full shade.



Northern Sea Oats - *Chasmanthium latifolium*

Height: 2-3 feet.

Width: 2-3 feet.

Bloom: green, June-July, maturing to copper/brown.

Notes: Has bamboo like appearance. Very attractive seed heads in late summer/fall. Will grow in full shade. Reseeds very heavily.



Greater Wood Rush - *Lazula sylvatica*

Height: 8-12 inches.

Width: 12-15 inches.

Bloom: Yellow/green, April-May, maturing to chestnut brown.

Notes: Excellent for shaded woodland sites. Soft green foliage.