

PANSIES!

In Pots & Packs NOW

PLANT CORNER

Welcome to another year of the Plant Corner, a series of profiles of STAR PERFORMERS among perennial garden plants from the folks at Chaska Farm & Garden.

Two Great New Grasses!

I continue to be easily excitable about ornamental, perennial grasses so I've decided to pick two to highlight. Both put a spot of yellow leaf color into the landscape but they do it in delightfully different ways.

The smaller of the two is Hakonechloa 'All Gold', but we shorten this to 'All Gold' Hakone grass. This is a new version of a great favorite of mine the Golden Hakone grass. 'All Gold' is not

striped or quite as platinum blonde as Golden Hakone, it is in fact more chartreuse but it is more vigorous, settling in and bulking up faster. I have not followed 'All Gold' through a severe winter, but hardiness doesn't appear to be a problem.

The Hakone grasses are incredibly useful in the landscape and being around 15 in. tall with no heads to clip, they make the front of a border in sun or shade neat and bright. I think the form of these grasses is the story, they have loft, that is they stand up firmly, but they also have fop and dance, that is a horizontal, fountaining character that moves easily in a breeze. Their tops block the view of their own stems and the ground around. There is a certain disheveled look to them without looking like an animal slept on them last night, think Tina Turner's hair!

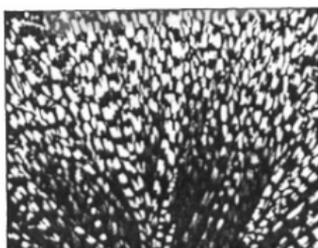
Hakone grasses are easy to grow and once established are quite drought tolerant. They keep popping up in my gardens because they are so often a great answer to a difficult spot. They do not spread by themselves however, it's me.

The second grass is Miscanthus 'Gold Bar', a new version of what is often call porcupine grass because the leaves are banded or variegated against the grain of the leaf. Most variegated leaves are striped in the grain of the leaf. This banding looks like the

quills on a porcupine, sure enough. Miscanthus grasses are also called maiden grass or hardy pampass grass, but much confusion is possible so best to learn to say Miscanthus (think Miss Kansas).

'Gold Bar' is a shorter version (3-4 ft.) of porcupine grass, many of which grow 7 ft. tall, anything but petite. The banding is also more frequent and intense on 'Gold Bar' with the overall effect being a finer texture and more of that bright yellow color for show. The fluffy pampass grass heads are late on 'Gold Bar' and may come only with a warm and extended fall, but the leaf show with the yellow banding on a stiff upright plant is enough for constant comment.

Miscanthus grasses are a large and varied group but all require bright sun. They tolerate a wet site but are water misers as are many grasses, and will tolerate dry as well. Hardiness is an issue with most Miscanthus here, only a few are rock hardy. But they are close so some winter cover is good insurance with 'Gold Bar', but well worth this small effort for an otherwise easy perennial. Miscanthus are warm season grasses, expect them to begin growth late in May, plenty of time to cut the previous year's growth left standing for winter interest.



Chaska FARM & GARDEN



112 W. Hwy. 212 • Chaska
448-2511

Web Site:
<http://members.aol.com/chaskafg>
E-mail: chaskafg@aol.com

