

## Native Grasses and Sedges

Linda R. McMahan, PhD.  
Horticulturist, Oregon State University



Among the many native plants becoming more common in horticulture are the grasses and sedges. Since many of these species are widespread, check the source of the plants if possible—the closer of origin to your home, the better adapted and more appropriate it will be. All three of these are WaterWise plants—there are more native grasses available, but most are restricted to wetter prairies and require additional water in a landscape. Although sources of plants may be difficult to find, check with native plant nurseries that may be able to help you locate some plants or do a web search. I was successful at locating several Oregon nurseries that carry plants or seeds by searching on the web.

Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*) is one native grass that is relatively commonly available. In its true form it is a bunch grass, but can be mowed if the mower height is kept high. It is native to much of the western United States. A rarer form, *F. idahoensis* ssp. *roemerii*, often called Roemer's fescue, is becoming more commercially available every year from Willamette Valley sources. Sometimes it is referred to as *Festuca roemerii*. The subspecies has a nice blue-green appearance. Photographs and more information can be found at <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=FEID>

Prairie junegrass, *Koeleria macrantha*, is a widespread grass in North America—Oregon is within its natural range. Junegrass typically grows here in upland prairies, which is an increasingly rare habitat. It grows as a perennial bunch grass, meaning that it forms clumps instead of spreading out as would a typical grass found in lawns. It grows 1-2 feet tall with silvery foliage and attractive flower heads. More information is available at the plants database for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at [http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=koma](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=koma) and a Natural Resources Conservation Service fact sheet at [http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_koma.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_koma.pdf)



Photo of Roemer's fescue from <http://depts.washington.edu/propplnt/Plants/Festuca%20idahoensis%20subsp.htm>