

GROWERTALKS

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Emerald Coast Growers Expands Infertile Miscanthus Collection

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Ornamental grasses continue to gain popularity in North American gardens and landscapes, and that's no surprise when considering their many benefits. Whether they're selected for their beauty and grace or because they can fill needs for drought tolerance, tough soil conditions or native habitats, there's an ornamental grass for nearly every need. And while their beautiful flowers can be the icing on the cake

atop striking foliage, there are situations where viable seed is not desirable, in which case infertile grasses become the perfect option.

For the grower, this helps keep the variety true to type in container production. It's also an advantage for the consumer to help keep the variety in check in their garden and confident that the plant will remain true to name.

The other, perhaps less-obvious, advantage of infertile grasses is that because the plants aren't putting energy into producing seeds, they're more vigorous, flower earlier and produce flowers for a longer period of time.

Emerald Coast Growers recognized the need for infertile grasses decades ago, and works diligently with breeders and university researchers to continuously bring more infertile grasses to the market that are as beautiful as they are valuable. While their collection of infertile grasses includes over a dozen pennisetum and miscanthus, today's spotlight is on their lineup of infertile miscanthus, including its newest addition for the 2024/2025 season, Morning Sun.

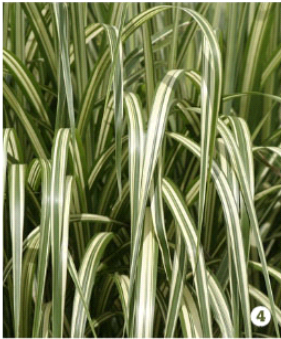




Morning Sun debuts in North American nurseries and garden centers in the spring of 2025. Developed by Dr. Wayne Hanna with the University of Georgia, its variegated foliage features gold horizontal bands with an arching habit and graceful tan flowers held high above the foliage. It adds the typical *Miscanthus Zebrinus* form that had previously been missing from the infertile *miscanthus* lineup. It grows 6- to 8-ft. tall in the garden, is hardy to USDA Zones 5 to 10 and prefers full sun.

Morning Sun will be in good company with Emerald Coast's existing line of infertile *miscanthus*:

- *Miscanthus × giganteus* (Giant Miscanthus) features upright clumps of wide green leaves with flower stalks that soar to 10 ft. It's a stunning selection discovered in Japan in the early 20th century. Its light pink plumes mature to silver, creating a bold garden statement. Hardy to USDA Zones 4 to 9.
- *Miscanthus sinensis* Bandwidth impresses with broad, bright gold bands that span rich green blades. Developed by Dr. Tom Ranney from North Carolina State University and introduced via Darwin Perennials, it forms full, compact stands that grow 2- to 3-ft. tall. Hardy to USDA Zones 5 to 10.
- Another introduction from NC State via Darwin Perennials is *Miscanthus sinensis* High Frequency. It forms 5-ft. upright columns of showy blades heavily cross-banded with gold. It's a Japanese silver grass and feathery red seed heads provide autumn interest. Hardy to USDA Zones 5 to 10.
- *Miscanthus sinensis* My Fair Maiden features green leaves with elegant buff-colored blooms in late summer. It grows up to 6- to 9-ft. in the landscape and is best suited for full sun. It's hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 10.
- Another exciting variety is *Miscanthus sinensis* Scout, which was developed by Dr. Wayne Hanna at the University of Georgia and is exclusively available from Emerald Coast Growers. It features slender green blades with white midribs that take on spectacular fall color. It's similar in form to *Miscanthus Gracillimus*. It reaches a mature height of up to 5- to 6-ft. in the garden and is hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 10.
- *Miscanthus sinensis* var. *condensatus* Cabaret (Japanese silver grass) rounds out the lineup with its ultra-wide blades with creamy white centers and dark green margins. It's equally impressive as a specimen as it is in masses. It grows up to 9-ft. in the garden and is hardy to USDA Zones 5 to 10.



All of these infertile miscanthus perform best in full sun and are available in 38- and/or 72-cell liners with the exception of *M. x giganteus*, which is available in 21-cell liners. Growing requirements are the same as for fertile miscanthus selections.

So what prompted Emerald Coast Growers to introduce infertile grasses in the first place? Shannon Ballard, New Plants Manager for Emerald Coast, said, “We wanted to remove the concern about seed fertility in grasses. We are fortunate to work with breeders who are developing infertile miscanthus and pennisetum for their ornamental value, economic savings in production and performance in the garden. The ultimate reason we are offering these grasses is to be responsible in the industry. This ensures that the grower and consumer will be able to have confidence in these two genera

whether they have concerns or not.”

Shannon has observed a slow and steady increase in demand for infertile grasses.

“Their popularity has mostly gained momentum with growers to have an alternative for those with concerns,” she said. “The pennisetums’ sales velocity is increasing a little faster with container growers wanting better crop consistency. They also have great ornamental characteristics rivaling other grasses in the industry.”

Asked what’s coming down the pipeline at Emerald Coast Growers, Shannon said, “We are always looking to provide the most current breeding and addressing any issues that arise for the grower and the consumer.”

For more information about infertile grasses or to order, visit ecgrowers.com or call (877) 804-7277. **GT**

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