Liriopogon Overview

Species of *Liriope* and *Ophiopogon* are considered to be the most important groundcovers sold by the nursery industry in the southeastern United States (Mcharo et al., 2003). Currently 31 selections and cultivars of *Liriope* and *Ophiopogon* are grown and sold in Florida (Table 1). Of these, *Liriope* ‘Super Blue’ is produced by 115 growers, by far the most widely, followed by selections of *Ophiopogon japonicus* and *Liriope muscari*.

These two closely related genera are characterized by evergreen grass-like leaves and spike-like inflorescences. *Liriope* and *Ophiopogon* plants form clumps, mounds or patches in the landscape due to stolon-like rhizomes that vary in length and number with species (Fantz et al., 2015). These morphological similarities have resulted in taxonomic confusion in the nursery trade such that there is widespread misidentification of genera, species and clones as well as multiple trade names (Lattier et al., 2014; Mcharo et al., 2003).

Common names such as lilyturf and liriope for *Liriope* spp. and monkey grass, mondo grass, border grass and Aztec grass for *Ophiopogon* spp. reflect their uses as groundcovers and border plants, although these common names are often applied to both genera interchangeably. Native to southeast Asia, *Liriope* contains eight species of which four are commonly cultivated, and *Ophiopogon* consists of about 65 species but only a handful are commonly cultivated (Lattier et al., 2014; Nesom 2010). As one indicator of these plants’ popularity and widespread use, nearly 225 cultivars of *Liriope* and *Ophiopogon* have been recorded in the U.S. as of 2015 (Fantz et al., 2015).

Table 1. List of liriopogons grown in Florida nurseries and number of growers producing each as of September 30, 2020 (PlantANT, <https://www.plantant.com/find-plants>, accessed 30 September 2020).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scientific name and cultivar** | **Number of Florida growers** |
| Liriope ‘Super Blue’ | 115 |
| Ophiopogon japonicus 'Nana' | 66 |
| Ophiopogon japonicus | 55 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Big Blue’ | 34 |
| Ophiopogon intermedius ‘Argenteomarginatus’ | 27 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Evergreen Giant’ | 23 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Variegata’ | 23 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Emerald Goddess’ | 20 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Aztec’ | 18 |
| Ophiopogon intermedius | 16 |
| Ophiopogon jaburan | 9 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Evergreen’ | 8 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Silvery Sunproof’ | 8 |
| Liriope spicata | 8 |
| Liriope ‘Odom’s Big Blue’ | 5 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Variegated Giant’ | 4 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Royal Purple’ | 3 |
| Liriope ‘Green Lane’ | 2 |
| Liriope muscari | 2 |
| Liriope muscari ‘Super Green Giant’ | 2 |
| Ophiopogon jaburan 'Variegatus' | 2 |
| Ophiopogon japonicus 'Super Dwarf' | 2 |
| Ophiopogon japonicus 'Variegatus' | 2 |
| Ophiopogon planiscapus | 2 |
| Liriope ‘Blue Spire’ | 1 |
| Liriope ‘LIRF PVR’ Isabella | 1 |
| Liriope ‘White Minor’ | 1 |
| Liriope muscari 'PeeDee Ingot' | 1 |
| Ophiopogon jaburan 'Variegatus' | 1 |
| Ophiopogon japonicus 'Golden Variegated' | 1 |
| Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' | 1 |