

Fountain Grass, *halfah*

Pennisetum setaceum is called by its common name Fountain Grass, while in Arabic it is often referred to as *halfah*. Its area of distribution ranges from northern Africa, to tropical Africa, the Arabian peninsula, the Middle East and southwest Asia. This perennial grass grows between 90 cm and 1.2 metres high, with a spread of up to 1.5 metres. The flowers arrive in early summer as spikes up to 20 cm long. This grass is a very attractive ornamental plant that requires only low maintenance. Occasionally, pruning will densify the clump and cause it to rejuvenate better. Propagation is recommended by seeds and through division. Fountain Grass can be used in open country, for hillside planting and as a slope or bank stabiliser. In urban planting design, it is well known in many locations in Arriyadh. In King Fahd Road, the Murabba Parks, Wadi Hanifah and also in many private gardens, Fountain Grass is a long-time favourite because it provides light and beautiful images as groundcover, linear planting and grouped or massed planting. Another variety, *Pennisetum setaceum* ‘Cupreum’, is not as hardy as the green variety, but just as attractive. Its leaves are dark or purple-red, and the flower spikelets are light pink. More sheltered situations such as the Diplomatic Quarter and the Tuwaiq Palace inner garden are good locations for its use, where it is not so exposed to occasional frosts. Soil and irrigation requirements are comparable to those of the main species, i.e. very low, but stagnant water is not well tolerated.



GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: very arid, semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, division
Maintenance	: low

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: low
Salinity/ppm	: very high (6000 ppm)
Hardiness	: -6°C

SHAPE

Type	: grasses
Height	: 0.9 m-1.2 m
Spread	: 1.2 m-1.5 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: pastel white
Size	: 15 cm - 20 cm
Period	: June - September

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: caryopsis
Fruit size	: 0.3 cm