

# Giant Grass Has Many Uses

Growing up to 14' tall, *Miscanthus Giganteus* grass works well as a living privacy screen for home owners and outdoor enthusiasts. It's fast growth rate is much quicker than evergreens. Useful for screening food plots, deer blinds and hunting areas and for wildlife habitat. And unlike so many things planted that get eaten by hungry critters, wildlife leaves this completely alone!

In a farming application it is being used as a field crop for biofuel production, and can be turned into ethanol, grass pellets or burnable bales. Research is also being done into using this grass in plastics production. Grown in Europe for the last 30 years for this purpose,, *Miscanthus Giganteus* planted at about 4,000 rhizomes/acre can produce as much as 17 tons/acre, three times the yield of corn, with little or no input. Plus it's a perennial crop that can produce for decades. It is also useful as animal bedding, lasting twice as long as straw. It's not useful as a food source for farm animals, though goats will eat it.

This clump-forming grass is a sterile cross between two Asian grasses, so it doesn't produce seeds. Legal in all states it's considered non-invasive, as it spreads neither by seed nor runners and its growth can be controlled using herbicides around the perimeter. The rhizomes are similar to bulbs or tubers, storing nutrients. They multiply rapidly and can be dug and divided every few years to control the spread as well.

A lovely ornamental grass, it's useful in the landscape. It has lush green growth in summer, sports a silvery plume in fall, then turns tawny brown in winter. It provides cover through the winter, keeping its

leaves on through mid winter, then losing them to leave what looks like tall cattails. It can be cut down in fall or left to stand through winter. The debris can be burned or mowed if you wish, or leave it to simply regrow on its own.

"We've have shipped this plant to every state in the U.S", Carrigan remarks. Hardy in zones 4-9, it is very adaptable and will grow in all kinds of soils, though it does take good moisture to become established, which takes a year or so. The only area it will not survive in is a swamp, it's too wet for its woody root system. Basically to start a plot of this, one should remove as much competing vegetation as possible by applying an herbicide. Planting is easy and can be done by just removing a shovel or two of soil. Plant the divisions with about 4" of soil covering them and keep watered if needed. A warm season grass, it comes on late in spring, but once it starts growing you can just about watch it grow. Expect 6-8' of height on one division the first year and 1' of width. Coverage will be sparse the first year when planted at our recommended rate of 3' apart, but is a vigorous grower and needs room to spread or it can become crowded in short order. At the suggested planting rate our divisions take about 3 years to form a full hedge. If you wish for quicker coverage it can be planted closer together, or planted with multiple staggered rows.

Divisions are available for delivery both Spring and Fall. A typical division is about the size of the palm of your hand. It has several single rhizomes attached to one another. The division should be kept at the



"First year growth of rhizomes!" Carrigan sells bare root divisions as big as a hand that are easy to start.

size shipped and not broken down to smaller pieces. Its survival rate is better with a more established plant size. The pricing schedule is \$2.99 1-9, \$2.89 10-99, \$2.69 100-499, \$2.49 500-999, \$2.39 1000-up, with further discounts available for larger orders. Minimum shipping is \$8 for 1-5 plants. \$10 for the first 6-10 plants and \$4 for each 5-10 plants thereafter.

For much more information visit the website [www.lacycreekgrowers.com](http://www.lacycreekgrowers.com), or call Kathy at 517-726 -0026. Orders can be sent to Lacy Creek Growers, 7338 Kinsel Hwy., Vermontville, Mich. 49096.

**Reader Inquiry No. 80**

## No More Bales That Are Too Tight Or Too Loose

On-the-go density control is a big plus for small square baler owners who now must either stop and adjust tension at the bale chamber or put up with making bales that are often too tight or too loose. Bales of consistent size and weight stack and ship better providing hay buyers with added value.

The Airbaler is a complete bale density control system for small square balers that replaces spring or hydraulic systems. It uses air pressure instead of springs or hydraulics to ensure tension applied to the bale chamber remains nearly constant. The Airbaler also includes an optional Density Adjustor mounted in the tractor cab that allows the operator to increase or decrease the density of bales without even slowing down.

In a 2009 customer survey, 100 percent

of Airbaler users who responded reported an improvement in bale density and 98 percent said they would recommend the Airbaler to others. These are just some of the benefits reported by hay growers across North America:

- Bales are more uniform and consistent
- Bales are easier to collect with a hay stacker
- Bales stack better in the barn and during transportation
- Less time spent checking and adjusting bale density



- Fewer bales that are too loose or too tight
- Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Scott Seaver Co. LLC (ph 231 981-0081; [www.airbaler.com](http://www.airbaler.com)). **Reader Inquiry No. 81**