



TERIOR DESIGN ADVICE

KITCHENS

BATHROOMS

CELEBRITY STYLE

GARDENS

HOME TOURS

WHAT TO BUY

SOLVED

MO

TRENDING

[HOW TO CREATE A NICE-SMELLING HALL](#)[REASONS TO INSTALL A RAIN CHAIN](#)[THE BEST CROPS TO HARVEST IN OCTOBER](#)

When you purchase through links on our site, we may earn an affiliate commission. [Here's how it works.](#)

Gardens

## 7 of the best native grasses – to add drama and movement to your yard

Gardening experts recommend the best native grasses to support wildlife, reduce water consumption and put on a spectacular show



Sign up to our newsletter



The best native grasses will adorn your yard with textured foliage

(Image credit: Alamy/John Glover)



BY ZIA ALLAWAY  
PUBLISHED 2 DAYS AGO

If the only grasses you've ever grown are in your lawn, think again. This wonderfully diverse group of [ornamental plants](#) **Jump to category:** many US natives that will adorn your yard with their lush, textured foliage, graceful flowers and seedheads.

7 of the best

native grasses for  
different climates  
FAQs

chitectural types in a [low maintenance border](#), mid-sized species for meadows and mass plantings, or opt for  
ng sedges if you're looking for easy-care groundcover. Native grasses also offer great benefits for wildlife and  
onment, offering cover for small mammals and insects and playing host to dozens of caterpillars, while locking  
away carbon in their roots.

Native grasses make ideal additions to a [prairie planting](#) scheme, and are effective [drought-tolerant planting ideas](#). They  
are particularly popular in drought-prone states such as California, Texas, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and New Mexico,  
where the cost of maintaining a water-guzzling lawn is sky-rocketing – some local water agencies are even offering  
incentives to encourage folks to replace their lawns with more sustainable plants and features.

Sponsored Links

G  
Gi

ions would look like

Play Now

Elsewhere, in colder regions, natives have adapted to survive freezing winter temperatures and hot, dry summers with  
little maintenance or irrigation once established.

RECOMMENDED VIDEOS FOR YOU...

HOMES  
& GARDENS

5 Things Organizers Say Make Rooms Feel Smaller | Homes & Gardens

PLAY SOUND



Jump to category:

7 of the best





(Image credit: Alamy/Botanic World)

## 7 OF THE BEST NATIVE GRASSES FOR DIFFERENT CLIMATES

---

To inspire you, we asked two experts for their recommendations for native grasses suited to opposite sides of the country.

[Mark Richardson](#), director of horticulture at the New England Botanic Garden, offers suggestions for areas with long, cold winters, while [Kathy Crane](#), garden designer and owner of California's oldest native plant retail nursery, Yerba Buena Nursery, lists her favorites for warm, dry climates.



**Mark Richardson**

Director of Horticulture

Mark Richardson is Director of Horticulture at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill in Boylston, Massachusetts. He oversees the organization's living collection, which includes 17 gardens, indoor conservatories, growing areas, and surrounding woodlands.



**Kathy Crane**

Garden Designer

**Jump to category:**

---

**7 of the best**



## Pennsylvania Sedge (Carex Pensylvanica)



(Image credit: New England Botanic Garden)

**Best for:** Shady groundcover

**USDA hardiness zones:** 3-8

'If you're looking for groundcover that would work instead of lawn grass in a dry, shady spot, there's no better choice than the Pennsylvania sedge,' says Mark Richardson. 'It grows to about 12 in (30 cm) and can be mowed once or twice a year after plants are well established and will look to most people like turf grass, without the need for irrigation, fertilizer, or pesticides. This sedge does best in shade, and can tolerate average to dry soils.'

Kathy Crane also uses sedges in her Californian designs. Her favourites include field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*) and the shorter sand dune sedge (*Carex pansa*), both evergreen natives with spring flowers that make beautiful textured ground cover, although you can't walk on them as you would a lawn. These are hardy in zones 6–10.

## Dropseed (Sporobolus Heterolepis)

**Jump to category:**

---

**7 of the best**





(Image credit: New England Botanic Garden)

**Best for:** A textured carpet for full sun

**USDA hardiness zones:** 3-8

For groundcover in sunny areas, Mark suggests prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), a beautiful clump-forming grass that's relatively short, growing to about 12 ins (30 cm) in height, with taller airy flowerheads in summer. [Prairie Dropseed plants are available to buy at Nature Hills.](#)

The leaves are bright green and then turn yellow to orange in fall and brown over winter. 'This pretty grass doesn't need much moisture once established and thrives in well-drained soils, while tolerating low winter temperatures,' he says.

## Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium Scoparium)

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**



[native grasses for different climates](#)[FAQs](#)

(Image credit: New England Botanic Garden)

**Best for:** Meadow plantings

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4-10

If you're planning a meadow scheme, look no further than little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). Mark says: 'This is my number one choice for a dry, sunny area. It's a medium-sized, warm-season native grass that gets to about 2 ft (60 cm) in height and stays upright, where a lot of other meadow grasses flop over as the season progresses.

'It's a beautiful green, with hints of blue, in summer, and then in fall it turns purple to silver and then to light brown,' he continues. 'Little bluestem also looks great in mixed perennial borders, where it's upright habit and colorful fall display pairs well with late blooming perennials and fall foliage.'

[Little bluestem plants are available to buy from Nature Hills.](#)

## Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium Latifolium*)

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**





(Image credit: New England Botanic Garden)

**Best for:** Shade

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5-8

Few plants thrive in the dry soil beneath trees, but the native northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) available from [Nature Hills](#) is an exception, producing elegant clumps of bright green leaves and decorative seedheads in these shady situations. The foliage grows to about 2 ft (60 cm), while unusual flat seedheads dance on long, slim, arching stems from late summer.

Mark advises cutting off the seedheads to use in dried floral arrangements before they self sow if you want to keep this grass in check. 'While beautiful, when planted en masse it can really spread,' he adds.

## Leafy Reed Grass (Calamagrostis Foliosa)

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**



[native grasses for different climates](#)[FAQs](#)

(Image credit: Kathy Crane)

**Best for:** Mixing and matching in a border

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8a–10a

'This showy grass is a great addition to a mixed border and I like to plant it alongside drought-loving perennial flowers here in Northern California,' says Kathy Crane. 'It can be found growing wild on bluffs and cliffs in coastal scrub and in the forests of the Californian north coast, and it works equally well in gardens here.'

'The grey-green foliage contrasts beautifully with the horizontally held cream-colored flowers, which look like little paintbrushes when they appear in summer.' Kathy advises giving this grass a well-drained site for the best results and hand watering it once a month to keep it looking fresh.

## California Fescue (Festuca Californica)

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**



native grasses for  
different climates

FAQs



(Image credit: Kathy Crane)

**Best for:** Adding color to drought gardens

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7a to 10b

There are a few fescues adapted to the arid climate of California and other western states, but among the most popular is this mid-sized robust native. Growing to about up to 24 in (60 cm) in height, it produces mounds of arching gray-blue foliage that turns buff colored over time. 'It thrives in almost any site and soil, from steep banks to flat, clay-rich areas and

**Jump to category:** ' part shade,' says Kathy.

**7 of the best**



**native grasses for  
different climates****FAQs**

roots make it is a great choice for reducing soil erosion, too. I use it as an accent plant and love the way it  
when a gentle breeze touches the leaves. I also like to plant it under oaks, where the dappled light highlights its  
foliage and flowers. While drought tolerant, it can be kept looking lush with an occasional water,' she adds.

## Deer Grass (Muhlenbergia Rigens)



(Image credit: Kathy Crane)

**Best for:** Tall accent planting

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 to 10

This large, adaptable grass, native to the west, is a great choice for a focal point or covering a slope or bank. 'Deer grass grows to about 3ft (90 cm) and has great architectural presence. Its green foliage turns tawny in summer, when graceful, narrow flower stalks appear,' says Kathy.

'I use it in my designs as a cornerstone plant. Its tough nature makes it ideal for edging a sidewalk in a front yard, where even the local dogs won't cause it any harm when marking their territory,' she adds.

### FAQS

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**

## DO NATIVE GRASSES WORK WELL IN A BORDER?



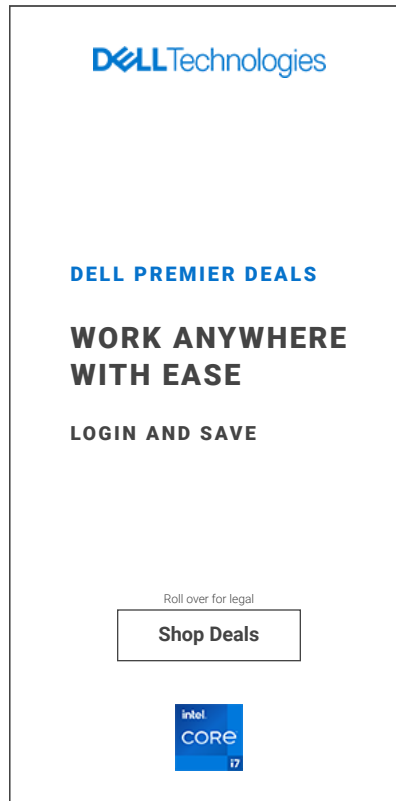
**native grasses for  
different climates**

Native grasses are extremely versatile and can work in a great many styles of backyard. Tall and airy varieties

**FAQs**

light and movement to borders, whilst smaller sedges are a good addition to any gravel garden ideas.

If you like the ideas of adding more naturalistic planting to your yard, you might want to incorporate native grasses into a prairie planting scheme. Or think about adding ornamental grasses to a patch of native wild flower meadow to complement the light and airy flowers.



The advertisement is a vertical rectangle with a white background. At the top is the Dell Technologies logo in blue. Below it, the text "DELL PREMIER DEALS" is written in blue, with a typo in the second 'L'. Underneath, "WORK ANYWHERE WITH EASE" is written in bold black capital letters. Below that, "LOGIN AND SAVE" is written in black capital letters. In the center, there is a small box with the text "Roll over for legal" above a button labeled "Shop Deals". At the bottom is the Intel Core i7 logo.

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**



native grasses for  
different climates

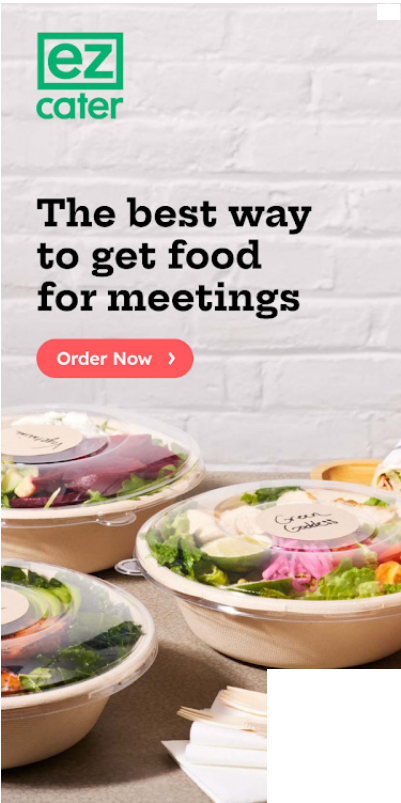
FAQs

Jump to category:

7 of the best

native grasses for  
different climates

FAQs



Jump to category:

7 of the best



native grasses for  
different climates

FAQs

---

Jump to category:

---

7 of the best

[native grasses for different climates](#)

[FAQs](#)



**ezcater**

**Get food for work**

On time. As ordered.

[Order Now >](#)

[Jump to category:](#)

7 of the best



**native grasses for  
different climates**

**FAQs**

---

**Jump to category:**

---

**7 of the best**

native grasses for  
different climates

## FAQs

taltz<sup>®</sup>

(ixekizumab) injection

80 mg/mL

Enroll in the  
Taltz Savings  
Program\* today

SIGN UP >

\*Governmental beneficiaries excluded, terms  
and conditions apply.

A photograph showing a man and a woman walking a large golden retriever on a leash along a paved path in a lush green park. The man is wearing a light blue striped polo shirt and khaki shorts, and the woman is wearing a dark blue sleeveless dress. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is filled with tall trees and a clear sky.

Taltz<sup>®</sup> and its delivery device base are trademarks owned or licensed by Eli Lilly and Company, its subsidiaries, or affiliate PP-fv-US-2584 01/2023 © Lilly USA, LLC 2023. All rights reserved.

**Jump to category:**

## 7 of the best



native grasses for  
different climates

FAQs

---

Jump to category:

---

7 of the best

[native grasses for different climates](#)

[FAQs](#)

---

## Sign up to the Homes & Gardens newsletter

Decor Ideas. Project Inspiration. Expert Advice. Delivered to your inbox.

Your Email Address

SIGN ME UP

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**

- ☐ Contact me with news and offers from other Future brands
- ☐ Receive email from us on behalf of our trusted partners or sponsors





**Zia Allaway**  
Freelance writer

Zia Allaway is a garden book author, editor, and journalist, and writes for a range of gardening and women's magazines, including Easy Gardens, Homes & Gardens and Livingetc, as well as The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph newspapers. She has also written books for the Royal Horticultural Society and Dorling Kindersley publishers, including Eco-Gardening, Compost, Low Maintenance, Practical House Plant Book, Practical Cactus & Succulent Book, Indoor Edible Garden, What Plant Where, and the Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers.

### The best free VPN of 2023

We help you pick the best free VPN service in 2023, explaining the pros, cons, and risks. Avoid VPN scams and get a free VPN for streaming Netflix.

### 25 Years Strong & Trusted by 37K+ Customers

NetSuite is Turning 25! That's 25 years of Helping You Do More With Less, Close Your Books in Days, and Drive Down Your Costs.

Oracle NetSuite | Sponsored

[Learn more](#)

### Game shows what the world without US military interventions would look like

Grand Historic Strategy Simulation | Sponsored

[Play Now](#)

### Girl From Water World is Almost 40 & Might Look Familiar

LifestyleA2Z | Sponsored

[Read More](#)

**Jump to category:**

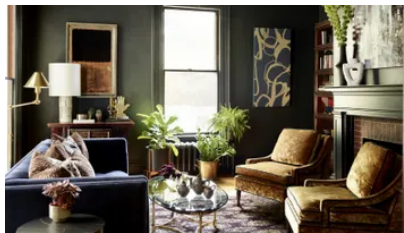
**7 of the best**

**native grasses for  
different climates**

**FAQs**

Sponsored

## Latest



**5 things people with nice-smelling den rooms always do**

Wondering how to make your den smell good? Try these top tips for keeping your den fresh and fragrant from interior designers

BY ANNA K. COTTRELL



**Why are my glasses going cloudy in the dishwasher?**

6 reasons your glasses may be cloudy according to professionals – keep your glasses clean and pristine by avoiding these common mistakes

BY LOLA HOULTON

## USEFUL LINKS

### ADVICE

[How to design a kitchen](#)

[How to design a bathroom](#)

[How to design a patio](#)

[Interior design: advice and tips](#)

[How to clean a washing machine](#)

### PICTURES

[Living room ideas](#)

[Bedroom ideas](#)

[Kitchen ideas](#)

[Bathroom ideas](#)

[Backyard ideas](#)

### BUYING GUIDES

[Best mattress](#)

[Best cordless vacuum cleaners](#)

[Best pillows](#)

[Best coffee makers](#)

[Best blenders](#)



ABOUT  
US

CONTACT FUTURE'S  
EXPERTS

ADVERTISE  
WITH US

CONTACT  
US

TERMS AND  
CONDITIONS

PRIVACY  
POLICY

COOKIES  
POLICY

CAREERS

Homes & Gardens is part of Future plc, an international media group and leading digital publisher. Visit our corporate site.

© Future Publishing Limited Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All rights reserved. England and Wales company registration number 2008885.

**Jump to category:**

**7 of the best**

<https://www.homesandgardens.com/gardens/best-native-grasses>