Introduction

Also known as *Avena sempervirens*, Blue Oat Grass is an perennial, ornamental grass that has attractive thin gray-green, or blue leaves (Fig. 1). Leaf blades grow to about 12 inches long and are 1/2 inch wide and taper to a fine point. Plants grow 18 to 30 inches tall. The glaucous foliage provides a welcomed contrast to a green border. Beige terminal panicles are produced in June through August, maturing to a light brown by the fall when they break apart and fall from the plant. Attractive, light brown, fall foliage color persists throughout the winter.

General Information

**Scientific name:** *Helictrotrichon sempervirens*

**Pronunciation:** hel-lick-toe-TRICK-awn

**Common name(s):** Blue Oat Grass

**Family:** Gramineae

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous; ornamental grass

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** edging; ground cover; border

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range
**Helictrotrichon sempervirens Blue Oat Grass**

**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Description**

- **Height:** .5 to 1 feet
- **Spread:** 1 to 2 feet
- **Plant habit:** round
- **Plant density:** dense
- **Growth rate:** slow
- **Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire
- **Leaf shape:** linear
- **Leaf venation:** parallel
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches

**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green

**Fall color:** brown or tan

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** brown

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** oval
- **Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- **Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- **Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.
Helictrotrichon sempervirens Blue Oat Grass

**Culture**

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown

**Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

Blue Oat Grass is attractive as a single accent plant in a very small garden, or it can be massed in groups for a beautiful, fine-textured drift. Blue Oat Grass prefers a full sun exposure, but will tolerate light shade. It prefers a moist soil that is well drained, however it will tolerate sandy as well as heavy clay soils. No more than yearly fertilization is needed to keep plants healthy. Propagate by division.

They are often planted about 2 feet apart so they form a solid mass of fine-textured foliage. Blue Oat Grass looks nice in a rock garden planted by itself, or more commonly in groups in front of a shrub border or in a row along a walk. They should last for many years with little care.

**Pests and Diseases**

Blue Oat Grass may be prone to foliar diseases when grown in shade.

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.