

# Purple Love Grass *Eragrostis spectabilis*

**Plant Type:** Native Perennial Grass

**Sun Exposure:** Full Sun

**Season of Interest:** Summer, Fall

**Bloom Time:** Summer, Fall

**Bloom Color:** Purple

**Height:** 8 to 14 in.

**Spread:** 10 to 16 in.

**Spacing:** 16 in.

**Water Needs:** Average

**Maintenance:** Very Little

**Soil Type:** Clay, Loam, Sandy, Rocky

**Soil pH:** Acidic, Neutral

**Soil Drainage:** Well Drained

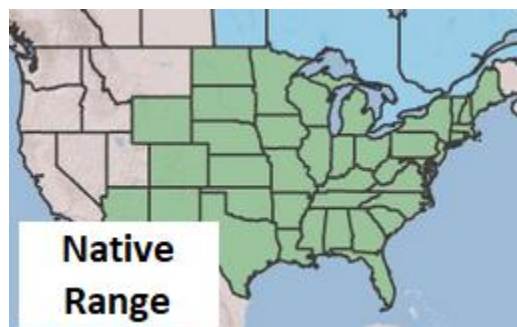
**Pests:** Aphids, Snot bugs

**Diseases:** Leaf spot

**Wildlife:** Butterflies, Birds



**Description:** Purple love grass is an ornamental grass native to Eastern North America with beautiful flowers that look like reddish-purple clouds when they bloom in late summer through early fall. They are beautiful in dried flower arrangements as well. It is an important species used for habitat remediation and water conservation. Preservation of natural ecology and our natural resources are important to gardeners these days. Perennial grasses are a great option for accomplishing these efforts in our own gardens. Another interesting reason to plant a native "short" grass is for erosion control. Planted native grasses reduce flooding as their deep roots hold water and release it slowly – water that may otherwise carve the landscape and leach into the flood plain.



While this perennial grass isn't short to most homeowners, at least by turf grass standards; it is considered a short grass in botanical terms. Purple lovegrass is a great plant for perennial borders and screens, as well as a liner for garden paths year-round. Both live and dead foliage is striking and attract various beneficial insects and wildlife. It is a host for the lovely Zabulon skipper butterfly larvae and provides nesting materials and food for ground-dwelling birds. For more information see: [plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/eragrostis-spectabilis](http://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/eragrostis-spectabilis).

**Care and Growing Tips:** Like most members of the grass family, purple love grass needs a sunny location with six or more hours of direct sun. Some afternoon shade is OK. Purple lovegrass can handle the intense heat of late summer up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. It also handles temperatures below zero in winter. For a couple of weeks after transplanting, water it slowly and deeply to help its roots become established. After that, there's no need for regular watering. Purple love grass has a wide tolerance for soil types. Sandy or gravelly soil is perfect; sandy soil is great because it is well-drained; and clay soils that that drain well are also an effective growing medium. Amend the soil with sand if needed to provide good drainage.

Feeding this plant species with a high nitrogen fertilizer once established will encourage new growth. While cutting these plants is not necessary, you can prune them to the ground in the garden in fall through winter. This can assist plants in perennial borders by helping them maintain their softly mounding habit. Do not cut them back in spring as they begin to grow new green leaves.