

INLAND SEA OATS

A Low-Maintenance Shade Plant

By Melody Stramer, Bexar County Master Gardener

Two of the most common questions we encounter at Master Gardener presentations are: (1) what plants grow well in shady conditions and (2) what plants are deer resistant? With that in mind, I'd like to introduce you to Inland Sea Oats, a plant that I only recently discovered, despite living here since 2009.



Inland Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) is a rare ornamental bunch grass that is happy in shady conditions. It tolerates a wide variety of soils, including poorly drained areas, but it also will tolerate periods of drought.

It is native to this area, attracts several pollinators, and the stems and seed heads provide shelter and food for visitors to our landscapes. You can find Inland Sea Oats in 29 states, from the Great Plains to the Eastern U.S.

Photo Credit: Marsha Krassner

Another feature of this plant is its year-round interest. It starts the year with light green grass, rising to 2-4 feet tall and looking good when other plants are struggling. Between August and early autumn, the seed heads develop and turn a contrasting golden brown with a tinge of pink. These stalks with seed heads are attractive in arrangements to brighten your inside space.



In late fall, the grass stalks turn golden, then copper, providing winter interest and contrast. In early spring, as with other ornamental grasses, you should cut back the clump to ground level prior to new growth.

Inland Sea Oats are easy to grow from transplants and easy to propagate from dried seed heads.

My recently-planted clump has taken off happily, and I'd like to get a half dozen more for shady spaces in the yard. After two winters of plant-killing freezes, this hardy grass will quickly fill in any empty spaces. In addition, Inland Sea Oats are said to be deer resistant and are good choices to contain erosion.

Photo Credit: Naturehills.com

One note of caution is that they are apt to spread. If you don't want that, remove the clumps and/or remove the seed heads before they drop.



Photo Credit: [Marsha Krassner](#)

If you decide to seek out this lovely shade-loving plant at your favorite local nursery, be aware that the former scientific name for them is *Uniola latifolia*. You may find that they may also go by any of the following names: Inland Oats, Northern Sea Oats, Wild Oats, River Oats, Upland Oats, and Indian Wood Oats.