



Photo by: Ashley Kroon

CHINESE SILVER GRASS

Chinese silver grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) was brought to the U.S. from Asia as an ornamental. It has now escaped from landscape plantings into natural areas across the eastern U.S. and in parts of Colorado and California. It continues to be a popular ornamental in many areas of the United States, as well as a barrier plant along roadsides and agricultural fields with many different varieties sold in the U.S. The grass is found escaping into disturbed and natural areas in all three counties in Delaware. Due to the large amount of dried biomass that remains during the fall and winter, it can be considered extremely flammable and a fire hazard. CSG spreads by underground roots or rhizomes and seed, though seed viability is variable depending on the cultivar.

CSG is a tall, densely bunched grass with upright to arching leaves. Its height can reach up to 12 feet and the leaves have a whitish midvein. Individual leaves taper to a point and the margins are sharp and slightly serrated. Mature plants have extensive perennial root systems and new growth emerges in mid-spring and rapidly replaces the previous year's dried erect leaves. Flowers on terminal panicles emerge in late August to early September and mature in early November. Initially a pale pink to reddish in color, the flowers gradually turn tan in the fall and last through winter.

CSG will grow on a variety of sites but prefers moist, well-drained soil to reach its maximum growth potential. It is intolerant of shade although it will persist in sparsely forested areas and small openings. In many natural areas, this grass is prevalent on abandoned home sites where it was used as an ornamental. It has been documented invading shores of reservoirs, roadsides, meadows and in forests and old fields following fires. Once established, CSG is difficult to remove.

Manual remove of the plants will likely result in re-sprouting if the entire root system is not removed. Chemical control is possible with readily available herbicides like glyphosate in late spring and/or fall. Follow-up will be required. When using herbicides, please read and adhere to the label.

Some native alternatives to CSG in Delaware are big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), bushy bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*), Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*) [coastal plain only], little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*).



Photo: wikipedia

QUICK FACTS

- Ornamental grass native to Asia
- Still a popular landscape plant in US
- Densely bunched with upright to arching leaves
- Leaves have whitish midvein
- Can reach 12 feet in height
- Spreads by underground roots or rhizomes, as well as seed
- Difficult to remove once established

