**Elymus hystrix**  
**Bottlebrush Grass**

This graceful grass naturally grows in dry woodlands and barrens mostly north of the Mason-Dixon Line.* It is the most shade-tolerant native grass, and its distinctive flowering and seed heads are a lovely ornamental feature, showing especially well when backlit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grass</th>
<th>Plant, Inflorescence, Seed Heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height: 2–4 feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread: 1–1½ feet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloom Color: Green</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Characteristics**

Ornamental, cool-season, clumping perennial grass with upright, narrow, open habit

Alternate, strap-like, medium green leaves, 12 inches long, with parallel venation

Pale green, bristly, 8-inch inflorescences mature to tan seed heads in summer and persist into fall

Spreads by self-seeding to form small colonies

**Attributes**

Tolerates drought, heavy shade, erosion, black walnut, and air pollution

No serious pests or diseases

Deer rarely severely damage

Birds eat grain-like seeds; larval host to Northern Pearly Eye butterfly and several moth species; livestock can eat foliage before production of seedheads, whose awns can injure the animals

**Growing and Maintenance Tips**

Soil Requirements: Well-drained

Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade, Shade

Water Requirements: Dry, Moist

Cut old foliage and seed heads to ground in late winter before new growth appears

Mass in lightly-shaded woodland settings

Hardiness: USDA Zones 5–9

*In the Mid-Atlantic Region, it is native to DC and MD, rare in DE, and scattered throughout PA. It is common in the mountains and Piedmont and infrequent to rare or absent in the Coastal Plain of VA.

**Excellent Replacement for**

**Soil Requirements:** Well-drained  
**Bambusa** sp. - Bamboo

**Light Requirements:** Sun, Partial Shade, Shade  
**Miscanthus sinensis** - Chinese Silver Grass

**Water Requirements:** Dry, Moist  
**Phyllostachys** sp. - Bamboo

**Cut old foliage and seed heads to ground in late winter before new growth appears**  
**Pseudosasa** sp. - Bamboo

**Mass in lightly-shaded woodland settings**  
*developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria*

**Images by Elaine Mills, Arlington, VA and U.S. National Arboretum**

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*Tried and True Native Plant Selections for the Mid-Atlantic*

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