

GREEN GONE BAD

FEATURED ORNAMENTAL PLANT: CHINESE SILVERGRASS (*MISCANTHUS SINENSIS*), INCLUDING VARIEGATED AND HYBRID MISCANTHUS

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on nature. Exotic *Miscanthus* (commonly known as Chinese silvergrass) exhibit this characteristic.



Chinese Silvergrass along the Chattooga River

MISCANTHUS SINENSIS is a member of the Poaceae or Grass Family which is native to Asia, and commonly planted as an ornamental in many areas of the United States. It is an extremely aggressive invader in the Southern Blue Ridge, where it escapes from planted landscapes, to impact native plant communities in stream corridors, along roadsides, within mountain bogs, and in open woodlands. It is currently invading the Chattooga River Corridor, where it has the potential to displace native plants used by birds, insects, and other animals. *Miscanthus* is considered a wildland fire hazard, due to its large biomass which dries in winter. Burning plants can have flame lengths of thirty feet and have a high potential for spread.



MISCANTHUS SINENSIS can grow up to 5 to 10 feet in height and is usually found in large clumps. The leaves can measure 3 feet in length and 1 inch across and have a silver white midrib. Its name is from the Greek word *mischos* meaning stalk, and *anthos* meaning flowers, referring to the stalked flowering spikelets. Numerous



terminal silvery pink feathery flowerheads are produced from these clumps each fall.

Although *Miscanthus* is thought to spread primarily through the movement of underground roots or rhizomes, it is an abundant seed producer and likely to spread also in water. The plant is shade tolerant but prefers forest edges. *Miscanthus* is often seen along roadsides where it has escaped from landscape plantings.

What you can do: If you are producing this for sale or have it in a landscape, consider replacing with native alternatives, such as Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), pink muhlygrass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), or any of

the native bluestems (*Andropogon sp.*)



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