



FYN Garden Q & A Series

Thomas Becker
Extension Agent, Florida
Yards & Neighborhoods



FYN TOPIC: Border Grasses

Question: I like the look of border grass planted in a narrow strip along our front sidewalk.
What would you use? Sam , email

Answer: The phrase 'border grass' refers to any plant, usually a groundcover species, used in a long, narrow strip along the front edge of a landscape bed. Plants used as border grasses are often less than 2 feet tall, clump-forming in growth habit and look grass-like. Most border grasses are **not** true grasses. By selecting the right one for your yard, border grasses are easy to maintain once established. One easy way to preserve them year after year is mowing or cutting back old growth in the late winter or early spring.

The most common one is Liriope (*Liriope muscari*). Whether solid green or variegated leaves, Liriope needs some shade. It creates an attractive solid green or variegated sidewalk border. Ask a sales clerk at a garden center to show you border grass. Most likely they will show you Liriope or another that looks similar: Mondo-grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*). To confuse you even further, these two types of plants might be called Monkey Grass or Aztec Grass.

Despite the wide spread use of these two border grasses, a better one to use in full sun is called Fax Lily (*Dianella tasmanica*). Also called Blueberry Flax, this clumping groundcover has green and variegated forms with wide, strap-like leaves and bold white stripes. The flowers are blue and less prominent than flowers on Liriope. Sometimes, other plants are used as border grass including: Bulbine (*Bulbine frutescens*) and several good native plants: Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*), Elliott's love grass (*Eragrostis elliottii*), Golden Creeper (*Ernodea littoralis*) and Pencilflower (*Stylosanthes biflora*).

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Spiderwort



Bulbine



Flax Lily

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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