Liriope muscari

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Introduction

This densely clumping, evergreen, grasslike perennial is quite attractive when grouped in a mass as a groundcover (Fig. 1). Spreading by underground rhizomes, Lilyturf quickly creates a 12-inch-tall, dark green mat, accented by attractive spikes of lilac purple blooms. Although frequently used as an edging, it is difficult to maintain it this way because of the spreading growth habit. ‘Evergreen Giant’ Liriope would be a better choice for an edging because it spreads very slowly.

General Information

Scientific name: Liriope muscari
Pronunciation: luh-RYE-oh-pee mus-KAR-ree
Common name(s): Lilyturf, Liriope, Border Grass
Family: Liliaceae
Plant type: perennial; herbaceous; ornamental grass
USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 10 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: mass planting; edging; naturalizing; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Figure 1. Lilyturf.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: lilac, purple
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches
Other

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Preferring shade but tolerant of full sun (except in the hottest regions of the Lower South), Lilyturf establishes itself quickly on rich, moist, well-drained soils but will tolerate less suitable conditions. No more than four to six hours of full sun is recommended in USDA hardiness zones 9 to 11. Lilyturf should be fertilized once each spring but requires little care otherwise. Plant on 8 to 10-inch centers for quick establishment. Once established, Lilyturf will require irrigation only during the severest drought. Mow it once each year during late winter to get rid of last year’s declining foliage.

Cultivars are available with variegated foliage, white and various shades of purple blooms. ‘Grandiflora’ has light lavender flowers; ‘Majestic’ has violet flowers; ‘Munroe White’, white flowers; and ‘Variegata’ has yellow-striped leaves, maturing to green, and dark violet flowers. Blooms on several of the cultivars are quite striking. *Liriope spicata* is slightly shorter and spreads much quicker by means of rhizomes. It makes a good companion ground cover to plant around fast growing shrubs since root competition helps check the growth of the shrub. Less pruning would be required on shrubs planted in the ground cover.

Propagation is by division of the clumps or by seed.

Problems include mites, slugs, snails, and scale. None except mites are usually of any consequence.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.