

LAWN GRASS ALTERNATIVES

MONDO GRASS (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)

COMMON NAMES:

Mondo Grass, Monkey Grass, Dwarf Lilyturf

Mondo grass is a perennial, evergreen, rhizomatous plant that is considered a shade plant, adaptable to a wide range of light intensities. Mondo grass, despite its name, is in the lily family, and unlike true grasses, it produces showy, although dainty, flowers.

Mondo grass is a relatively easy-to-grow ground cover that performs well in dense shade that prohibits the vigorous growth required for the long-term success of many turfgrasses. Mondo grass forms

dense, low-growing clumps of grasslike foliage, creating an attractive and uniform ground cover. It's a great alternative to traditional grass lawns, especially in areas where grass struggles to thrive. Mondo grass can also stabilize hillsides which may be subject to soil erosion and are too steep for mowing operations. Its root system helps bind the soil and reduce runoff.

Mondo grass prefers soils with adequate drainage and moisture but can handle periods of drought and flooding. Mondo grass can be easily confused with lirioppe (*Liriope muscari*). However, mondo grass leaves are narrower and finer textured than those of lirioppe, and mondo grass is less tolerant of cold weather than lirioppe.

Mondo grass does not tolerate frequent mowing, but its

ORIGIN

Eastern Asia.

FLOWERS

Lavender to white flowers in late summer, often hidden within the foliage. Flowers produce blue and sometimes white fruits.

FOLIAGE

Dark green, grasslike leaves that grow to 8-12 inches in length.

GROWTH HABIT

Spreads via rhizomes and can form ground-covering mats.

SIZE

Grows 6-12 inches (15-30 cm) tall.

ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Sunlight: Partial to full shade but can tolerate some sun in cooler climates. In full sun, leaves can yellow. Dark green foliage is accomplished in partial to full shade.

Soil: Well-drained, moderately fertile soil.

Mondo grass is best suited for well-drained, moderately fertile soil like what is found throughout Louisiana.

overall aesthetic may benefit from a yearly mowing. It is also a great choice for larger areas in need of a turfgrass alternative. When using mondo grass in landscaping, it's essential to consider factors such as local climate, soil type and specific design objectives.

Additionally, mondo grass pairs well with other ground covers, ornamental plants and hardscape features to create visually appealing and functional landscapes.



When using mondo grass in landscaping, it's essential to consider factors such as local climate, soil type, and specific design objectives.

Photo by Dan Gill

Water: Water weekly when rain is scarce, especially during the growing season. Has moderate drought tolerance.

Hardiness Zones: USDA Hardiness Zones 6 through 11.

USES

Landscape Plant: Ophiopogon japonicus is commonly used as a ground cover, border plant or edging plant in gardens and landscapes where turfgrasses struggle to survive due to lack of sunlight.

Indoor Plant: Can be grown indoors in containers in a well-lit room.

MAINTENANCE

Planting: Plant 4-12 inches apart. Planting the clumps in closer proximity will yield a denser and more abundantly lush appearance, in addition to helping to prevent weeds. Take into account your desired visual outcome for the area when creating the planting holes.

Pruning: To stimulate fresh spring growth, prune or trim away withered foliage during late winter. When mowing, adjust your mower blade to the maximum height setting. Be cautious not to scalp or cut too close, as it may harm emerging shoots. Mondo grass typically doesn't require mowing, but a

simple annual trim in the spring can encourage new growth.

Propagation: Divide plants for propagating during spring or early autumn. This is typically done by root or rhizome division. Can also be propagated by seed.

Pests and Diseases: Mondo grass remains relatively free of disease and pest infestations. Weed control in open areas during establishment may be an issue.

Preemergent herbicides can be used to help prevent weeds or remove them by hand until the mondo grass fills in areas. Slugs can be a problem in some areas.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Highly salt-tolerant evergreen ground cover.
- Deer and rabbit resistant.
- Tolerant of foot traffic and heavy shade.
- Very few insect pests.

CULTIVARS

Nana: A dwarf variety, growing about 4-6 inches in height, often used for edging or ground cover.

Variegatus: Variegated foliage with cream or yellow stripes, adding visual interest to garden beds.

AUTHORS

Eric DeBoer, Turfgrass Specialist and Assistant Professor, School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Science

Heather Kirk-Ballard, Consumer Horticulture Specialist and Assistant Professor, School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Science



Visit our website: www.LSUAgCenter.com

Pub. 3914-A (online) 12/23

The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.