

Festuca ovina v glauca – Blue Fescue

Festuca ovina v glauca, commonly known as Blue Fescue is a small clumping grass that grows in a neat cushion-like clump 15 to 30 cm in height with a similar spread. It is a cool season grass native to the mountains of Europe. The fine, wiry leaves are erect or arching, slightly rolled and less than 30 cm long, the leaves are coated with a greyish, powdery bloom that is easily rubbed off. In Summer, the flowering stems stand above the tuft of thread-like foliage and carry little flattened spikelets (flowers) that nod in the breeze. The inflorescence is not particularly showy and actually detracts from the handsome blue-grey foliage.

Usually is grown as a border or edging plant, its fine texture and neat, compact shape make it well suited to line a path or mark the front of a perennial border. Groups of Blue Fescue can be used in a flower bed to good advantage. The silvery blue-grey foliage intensifies white and pastel colours and cools down the reds and oranges. Planted close together in masses it makes a striking ground cover.

Blue Fescue is a short-lived clump-forming grass and does not spread by runners as do turf-forming grasses. It tends to die out from the centre after a couple years, when this happens, the clumps should be dug up and divided, and the divisions replanted. Fescue develops deeper foliage colour when grown in full sun, but it can tolerate partial shade and should be grown in part shade in areas with hot Summers. It cannot tolerate heavy, wet soils or constant high humidity. Blue Fescue is drought tolerant, tolerant of salty soil and coastal conditions and grows best in poor, sandy, well drained soils.

Propagation

Propagation of *Festuca* is very straightforward. Seed can be direct sown to the site or my preference, sown into a seed tray with a good loamy soil.

Sow seed and cover lightly. It can be beneficial to water from below for the first few occasions after sowing to avoid seed disturbance – do this by gently immersing the seed tray in water until the medium is lightly damp – do not immerse more than the bottom half of the tray or pot. Keep the medium lightly moist but not damp.

Grow the seedlings on in the seed tray or pot until at least 15cm in height.

Plant out in their final location in early Spring or after the danger of frost has passed.