

Festuca gautieri

*The Bearskin Fescue*

Festuca gautieri is commonly known as the Bearskin Fescue and is a hardy clump forming plant that retains its shape and works well along pavers or as an edging to garden beds.

Festuca gautieri is a perennial grass that is herbaceous and evergreen. They grow into a dense mound of approximately 20cm x 20cm in width and height sporting fine, bright green blades. Due to their thick tuft like habit it’s best to ensure an approximate 30 cm spacing between each plant.

Festuca varieties grow in full sun or light shade but boast their best colour in the full sun. With regards to soil types, they will tolerant dry or poor soils however are intolerant of saturated or poorly drained soil where they will rot and finally die. For spectacular colour and lush looking plants ensure they are in moist, well-drained soil, enrich with compost.

They have average water needs and once established are drought tolerant. They are versatile to various climatic conditions being both heat and cold tolerant with exceptional leaf colour often noted in colder climates. Festuca also tolerate wind and sea salt spray well and therefore make good subjects for seaside gardening.

Festuca are not generally purchased for flower value but it does form a typical grass like flower in the summer months. Although not a necessity, it is best to remove these flowers so that nutrients are rather used for plant growth and leaf colour.

Festuca is a low maintenance plant, should it look scruffy all you need to do is remove any dead or old leaf blades. This can be easily done by simply combing your finger tips through the foliage once in a while…this soft wonderful feeling is great garden therapy. If it’s necessary to cut the plant back or they are “tired” after winter do so in the spring months. Cut approximately a third of the blades off to encourage new fresh leaves to emerge. Clumps that have become too thick and overgrown for their areas can be divided every 2 – 3 years.

Festuca are form plants that hold their shape well .They are great when used one by one in rock gardens, along borders or pathways and do well in patio mixed containers where their texture and colour adds interest .They are also very appealing when used in tight mass planting as their mounded habit gives a soft rolling effect.