

# *Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'*

2009  
Perennial

Plant of the Year<sup>®</sup>



## **Hardiness**

USDA zones 5-9

## **Light**

Partial shade is the optimum location in hot climates while more sun is suitable in cooler areas

## **Soil**

This ornamental grass prefers moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil

## **Uses**

This long-season ornamental grass may be used as a ground cover, a border-front specimen, a mass planting, or in a patio container.

## **Unique qualities**

The plant offers vivid highlights in shaded areas or in evening gardens. This grass is also noted for its movement in breezes, offering a cascading or an undulating behavior.

## *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' Selected the 2009 Perennial Plant of the Year



*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' (golden hakone grass) is the Perennial Plant Association's 2009 Perennial Plant of the Year. This ornamental grass is a member of the Poaceae family. The species is native to Honshu Island, Japan. The genus derives its name from *Hakon*, a region in Japan, and *chloa*, the Greek word for grass.

Golden hakone grass grows 12 to 18 inches tall and 18 to 24 inches wide with an arching form that resembles a cascading miniature bamboo. Individual blades are 1/2" wide and bright yellow color with very thin green stripes. In the cooler days of autumn the golden foliage becomes tinged with shades of pink and red. *Hakonechloa* is used mainly for its golden foliage, although it does produce tiny, inconspicuous flower spikes from late summer through mid autumn.

Hardy to zones 5 to 9, golden hakone grass grows best in moist, humus rich, well-drained soil. This grass will not grow well in poorly drained soil, heavy clay soil, or very dry soils. Partial shade is the optimum location in hot climates while more sun is suitable in cooler areas. Deep shade may reduce the golden leaf color. Golden hakone grass spreads by stolons but does so slowly so it is not a threat to other companions. Since golden hakone grass is a slow grower, it will not be necessary to divide for many years. However, if division is desired it should be done in early spring as new growth develops. Nursery propagation is available by division or plugs. This shade tolerant grass has few insect or disease problems and is not favored by deer.

This grass requires little maintenance, other than cutting the dead leaves back in late winter or early spring.

*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' should find a place in many gardens. The combination of golden leaves with green stripes makes it a fantastic companion to hostas. This grass looks especially good with hostas that have a golden edge or have a bluish cast. Combine golden hakone grass with tiarellas that tend to have darker veination in the fall, or any purple or dark leafed plant, particularly heucheras or purple foliage bugbanes (*Actaea* - aka *Cimicifuga*.) Other good companion plants are astilbe, epimedium, wild ginger, bleeding heart and lady's mantle. As a container plant, golden hakone grass adds a lot of charm to any container when it cascades over the sides like a waterfall. It is also especially useful as an edging plant where it can cascade into a path. This ornamental grass is an excellent addition to an Asian-style garden or can be used to provide a somewhat tropical look and feel.

Any area of the garden that is darker and somewhat drab can benefit from golden hakone grass. When planted in mass the entire area glows like thousands of lightning bugs on a dark summer's night. When it is breezy this grass looks like a golden ocean swaying to and fro. For those gardeners who always go for the gold this will be a medal winner in the garden.

