

BAMBOO

GROWN AT

Summer Hill Nursery

We have been growing hardy bamboo at Summer Hill for ten years now and while we are not yet “experts” we have learned a lot about how various varieties respond to our climate and which ones are most popular with the gardening public.

Included are descriptions of the varieties we are growing and some general information about bamboo.

If you have further questions please call us and we will do our best to answer them.

If you visit us we can show you how they are growing in our gardens.

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The following is information and basic descriptions of the bamboo that we are selling now. Each year we are learning more about bamboo and will share the information with you. Although we've sent you some of this information in the past, it is now updated to 2010.

Clump Type Bamboo

Fargesia denudata

Height: 10-12 feet Minus 10°F Full Shade

This is a new and rare *Fargesia* that is quite similar to *Fargesia murielae*. It has yellowish green culms and pea green leaves and tends to be more upright growing than *F. murielae*.

Fargesia dracocephala

Dragon's Head Bamboo

Height: 7-10 feet Minus 10°F Partial Shade

This species forms a very tight and full growing clump with a weeping habit. It has the typical willow-shaped leaf of all the *Fargesia*. If in partial sunshine, the culms may turn a dark color, in some cases red or reddish-black. This species can stand more sun and drier, hotter conditions than the other *Fargesias* we grow. We are also growing a variegated form of *Fargesia dracocephala* named 'White Dragon'. It is an interesting novelty but does not grow nearly as vigorously as the type plant.

Fargesia murielae

Umbrella Bamboo

Height: 12-15 feet Minus 20°F Full Shade

This is one of the best known of the *Fargesias*, forming a very tight clump with a weeping, arching habit to the culms. The leaves are a light green and the culms are also green. The weeping form gives it a very delicate appearance; however, it is one of the hardiest of the hardy bamboo group. The plants we are offering are grown from seedlings we obtained in 2000. *Fargesia murielae* bloomed (and died) in the 1990's and shouldn't bloom again for 90 years.

Fargesia nitida

Blue Fountain Bamboo

Height: 12 feet Minus 20°F Full Shade

This plant forms a clump with weeping fountain like culms that are dark in color. The culms of *F. nitida* are a bit different in that they do not make branches the first year. This is a very upright growing form of *Fargesia*; however, the culms have a weeping habit at the top. Most of our plants of *Fargesia nitida* flowered in 2005 and 2006 and subsequently died. We have hundreds of seedlings from our own propagation that are available in two and three gallon containers. This new generation should not bloom for another 90 years.

Pleioblastus viridistriatus Green Stripe
Height: 3-4 Feet Minus 5°F Shade

Another good variety that has excellent variegation - chartreuse leaves with green striping. It prefers shade but will produce more vivid color with a good bit of sun. Its leaves can be 6 to 8 inches long and are quite spectacular in the right location. It is best mowed to the ground every spring as the new culms and leaves produce the best effect.

Pleioblastus viridistriatus chrysophyllus Chartreuse Leaves
Height: 3-4 Feet Minus 5°F Shade

This variety is exactly the same as *P. viridistriatus* except the leaves are chartreuse without the dark green stripes - an excellent plant to brighten up a shady spot. If planted in a sunny location the leaves will be bright yellow.

Sasaella masamuneana 'Albostriata'
Variegated Leaf
Height: 6 feet 0°F Partial Shade

This is a fairly vigorous, variegated, but basically dwarf bamboo. Although some green leaves may appear, especially later in the season, most of its leaves have a creamy white striping that is very, very pleasant. It is one of the most popular of the variegated forms of bamboo. Like *Pleioblastus variegatus*, it benefits from a good heavy trimming in the spring so the new culms show off its variegated striping to the best advantage.

Sasa veitchii Kumazasa
Height: 2-3 Feet Minus 5°F Shade

A wonderful and fascinating ground cover for a shady spot, this species produces a good green ground cover throughout the summer. However, in the fall the leaf margins of the leaves die and turn a creamy tan giving a very showy variegated effect throughout the fall and winter. This is one of the most popular dwarf, or ground cover-type, bamboos. It is best mowed in the spring, but if not, the new green leaves will rapidly overcome the old ones.

Large Shrub Forming Bamboo

Hibanobambusa tranquillans 'Shiroshima' Variegated Shrub
Height: 14 Feet 0°F Sun to part Shade

This can be quite an imposing shrub with large (up to 10 inches long) leaves that have a striped variegation. An excellent variety for a sunny area. We only grow a few each year.

Indocalamus tessellatus Large Leaf

Phyllostachys atrovaginata Incense Bamboo
Height: 30 feet Minus 5°F Full Sun

One of the most important attributes of this species is the fact that it has air canals in its rhizomes and roots, which allow it to grow in wet or boggy soil. Most of the *Phyllostachys* forms want to be in an area with good drainage, but *P. atrovaginata* can stand wet areas which, unfortunately, many people falsely associate with bamboo. The surface of the culm is said to have a scent that resembles sandalwood, therefore, the name Incense Bamboo.

Phyllostachys aureosulcata Yellow Groove Bamboo
Height: 35 Feet Minus 15°F Sun

Excellent, very hardy species, the culms are good bright green with a yellow sulcus. This variety grows very upright.

Phyllostachys aureosulcata 'Aureocaulis' Yellow Culm
Height: 30 Feet Minus 15°F Sun

This is very similar to *P. aureosulcata*; however, the culms are entirely yellow except for an occasional green stripe.

Phyllostachys aureosulcata spectabilis Yellow Spectacular Bamboo
Height: 32 Feet Minus 15°F Sun

This is fast becoming my favorite *Phyllostachys*. The culms are a bright yellow with a dark green sulcus - a good upright grower. I like it so much that I planted one right next to my office door.

Phyllostachys bissetii David Bisset Bamboo
Height: 30 Feet Minus 20°F Sun

An excellent bamboo with good green culms and a lot of them, this would make a good tall hedge. One of the hardiest bamboos that we grow, it gives what I consider a very clean, neat appearance.

Phyllostachys bissetii 'Dwarf' Dwarf David Bisset Bamboo
Height: 18 feet Minus 20°F Sun

This is another excellent screening bamboo, making many culms as does the larger form, *P. bissetii*. The only difference is that the dwarf form will be shorter upon maturity than *P. bissetii*.

Phyllostachys decora Beautiful Bamboo
Height: 20-25 Feet Minus 5°F Sun

Phyllostachys vivax Very Tall
Height: 70 Feet Minus 5°F Sun

In the right locations, probably not in New England, this bamboo can reach the height of 70-75 feet, making it the tallest of the hardy bamboos. The culms are somewhat weak, however, so there is the risk of them fracturing under strong winds or wet snow. Good green culms; this is a nice variety especially if you want some height quite rapidly.

Phyllostachys vivax aureocaulis Golden Vigorous Bamboo
Height: 70 Feet Minus 5°F Sun

This is a very new introduction to this country. It has the same attributes of the species type; however, the culms are a good yellow with random green stripes - an exceptional new variety - very rare.

Phyllostachys aureosulcata 'Harbin' Green Culm - Yellow Stripes
Height: 32 Feet Minus 10°F Sun

A new variety with interesting culms. It has shorter branches than other varieties giving it a very neat appearance.

Phyllostachys a. 'Harbin inversa' Yellow Culm – Green Stripes
Height: 32 Feet Minus 10°F Sun

Same habits as 'Harbin' but the color of the culms is reversed.

Pseudosasa japonica Arrow Bamboo
Height: 18 feet Minus 5°F Partial Shade to Full Sun

This is a rather coarse bamboo but it has very large leaves that can be up to a foot in length making it very effective as a tall hedging plant. It appears to be quite tolerant of salt air; therefore, it would be a good plant to use near the ocean. This is an excellent bamboo for hedging - very erect and the large leaves are quite impressive. The Japanese made arrows from its straight culms, therefore the common name.

Semiarundinaria fastuosa Palm Tree Bamboo
Height: 34 feet Minus 5°F Sun

This is another bamboo that because of its height and wide leaves makes a very imposing screening hedge. The green culms, when exposed to sun, gradually turn a brick red to purple-brown color. It does not run as aggressively as other spreading bamboos, and it is also tolerant of salt air.

Basic Bamboo Information

We are far, far from being bamboo experts here; however, the following is an extremely simplistic, but hopefully helpful, bit of information. This is coming from someone who knew nothing about bamboo six years ago so I am aware of the type of information the novice requires.

To start with, the bamboo cane, as we think of it, is called a culm while it is still alive and part of the plant. It becomes a “cane” after it is cut off and dried. The process of culms emerging from the soil is called “shooting”, as in “*Fargesia murielae* shoots a lot earlier in the season than *Fargesia nitida*”. The growth period for a bamboo culm is somewhere between six and eight weeks. All the height that a culm will achieve takes place in this period of time. Three to five inches of growth a day is not uncommon for some of the faster growing varieties, and indeed the growth rate can exceed that by quite a bit. Although the culms produced in a given year will not grow any taller, the culms in subsequent years generally have a larger diameter and will grow taller. Therefore, the bamboo planting will gain in height; however, the original culms will stay the same size until they die after four or five years. Most bamboo species are evergreen. Very harsh winters may kill the leaves and turn them tan; however, the plants will regenerate new leaves the following spring and early summer.

For our purpose here, we can divide bamboos into two general types. Clump Type - a single plant of bamboo that will produce culms that are taller as the years go by and will also spread, but only at a very slow rate, as a clump. The rhizomes are short and each one forms a culm. The only clump bamboos we grow are species of *Fargesia*. It will take several years for an individual clump to have a diameter of let's say four feet because it will just be adding culms around the edge of the original plant.

The other type bamboo is called Running Bamboo. Here the rhizomes do indeed run away from the original planting - ten to twelve feet in a year would not be uncommon for some varieties. The following spring, culms will be produced along the length of these rhizomes. Therefore, running bamboos can spread quite rapidly and depending on where they are planted, containment devices should be installed to restrict their rapid spreading. Running bamboos are sometimes called invasive, but I dislike using that term at this point since “invasive” is being used by environmentalists to describe plants such as *Elaeagnus*, Bittersweet, Multiflora Rose, Loosestrife and other plants that are spread by seed and can become a dominant plant within an ecosystem. This is unlikely to happen with bamboo since, in most cases, when a bamboo flowers, the plant dies and any possible seed germination would be restricted to the immediate area. Most of the bamboos that are in commercial production come from Asia, and in some cases a single plant of a species was introduced into Western Europe and the United States. Divisions from this single plant may have become the only stock of this species available. Since they are all from the same plant, they all flower and die at approximately the same time. An example of this is *Fargesia murielae* which in the 1990's blossomed and died throughout Western Europe and the United States. Just about all the original

plants of *F. murielae* have died, and plants in production now come from seedlings of this blooming period. *Fargesia murielae* is not expected to bloom again for another ninety years or so. Other species that were introduced into cultivation from many different plants will have blooming periods that are quite different, and these species will not bloom at the same time.

Almost all the bamboos that we are growing, with the exception of *Phyllostachys* and *Hibanobambusa* forms, require partial to full shade. One of the finest bamboo gardens I've seen is planted almost entirely under a shade canopy of White Pines that had been limbed up to quite a height. When I describe the various varieties we have available, I will mention whether they require shade or full sun. One of the questions I've been asked a million times since I've been in this business is: What can I plant in the shade? Well, here is the answer - most varieties of bamboo, especially the variegated forms, are excellent plants for a shady area. The variegated forms will "light up" a shady area very well and are happy in this location.

Another question that comes up is the type of soil and the amount of dampness bamboo can withstand. Good average garden soil will produce fine plants. Since they are a grass, bamboos like a good bit of fertilizer with high nitrogen content. Almost all bamboos need good drainage. Adequate moisture is important, but they do not like wet feet and wet areas are sometimes used as a containment device for running bamboos. There are a few bamboos that have hollow rhizomes and can live in wet areas. Two varieties we are growing now that will take that type of treatment are *Phyllostachys atrovaginata* and *Phyllostachys heteroclada*.

Some of the forms of bamboo that we have are very low growing. *Pleiolobus distichus* will only grow approximately one foot tall and is used as ground cover. Many of the ground cover bamboos are mowed to the ground every spring so that the new culms coming up in the early summer make a better show. We also have mid-sized shrub type bamboos, and we grow quite a few varieties of *Phyllostachys* which in some cases can grow thirty to forty feet in our climate. When most neophytes think of bamboo, I believe they either think of the *Phyllostachys* forms which are running and produce big, large groves of bamboo if left unchecked, or *Fargesia* species which are clump bamboos, growing only to about eight to ten feet tall and staying contained by their own growth habits.

In our price list, bamboos are listed alphabetically with the growth type; i.e. clump or running, also the height will be listed and the hardiness. Hardiness, of course, is a very important factor for us in the Northeast, and I find quite a bit of difference in the hardiness attributed to different species and varieties depending on which book or price list I am reading. I will be listing what I think is a respectable average, and I will try to stay on the conservative side.

For more detailed information, I recommend *Bamboo for Gardens* by Ted Jordan
Meredith
Timber Press

To the best of my knowledge, deer do not eat bamboo.

Running Bamboo Barriers

There are several methods of containing running bamboos. Water or very wet areas will usually stop bamboos, as they do not like wet conditions, with the exception of a few varieties. Another method is to dig a trench around larger growing bamboos, fill the trench with sand, which is easily penetrated, and each fall dig down into the sand cutting any of the rhizomes that have crossed it, then lift the rhizomes from the area beyond the sand pit. If bamboo is planted in the center of a lawn area, just mowing the lawn during the time of shooting will keep the bamboo under control by constantly breaking off and cutting the culms. I've even heard of Round-up being used, spraying culms that have been produced by rhizomes. The culms that were sprayed died, but the center plant was left in good shape. I do not recommend this method, however, until far more experimentation has been done. Probably the most common and most successful method of containment is to install a barrier of either metal or plastic around the bamboo at a point where you wish the rhizome spread to stop.

The type of containment device can vary dramatically depending on which species of bamboo we're talking about. Some of the smaller *Pleioblastus* forms, for instance, could be contained by a large 20-gallon plastic container with the bottom cut out and buried in the ground. However, for the larger *Sasas* and, of course the *Phyllostachys*, a more elaborate barrier must be installed. A trench, dug around the bamboo at the area that the rhizomes want to be stopped, should be at least 2 1/2 feet deep. 60 mil or heavier plastic should then be placed in the trench - right up to the top of the soil line and perhaps an inch or two higher. Two strips of metal bolted together are commonly used to attach the two ends of the plastic so that no rhizome can find its way through the joint. If the barrier is placed in a square or rectangular shaped container, the corners should be rounded so the rhizomes will tend to curl around the plastic instead of trying to penetrate it on a sharp corner. The soil at the base of the plastic should be well compacted to discourage rhizomes from going down and under the polyethylene. This method should work quite well, but the top of the plastic should be inspected every fall to make sure that no rhizomes have jumped the plastic (I'm assuming the plastic would be covered with mulch to put it out of sight). If any rhizomes have escaped, they should be cut off and removed from the ground.

