Switchgrass ‘Ruby Ribbons’  
(*Panicum virgatum*)

3’ x 2-2.5’ (4’ in flower) upright vase-shape clumping grass, with fine-textured arching blades.

Switchgrass is a CT native, found in a wide variety of habitats, including meadows, roadsides, bluffs, streambanks.

The popular ‘Ruby Ribbons’ was bred and selected by Dr. Mark Brand at UConn.

Soft blue-green foliage emerges in spring, then begins turning a unique wine red by early summer. The color intensifies into autumn, and covers nearly the entirety of the blades. Beautiful when back-lit by early and late sun.

Large open cloud-like panicles of showy dusky-purple flowers, floating well above foliage, begin blooming in late July. The red airy ornamental seed heads provide long-lasting winter interest.

Foliage and flower panicles turn a sandy beige by November, then persist upright into winter, providing winter interest.

Sun to part sun, keeps form best in sun. Average to wet soils, prefers moist loam. Drought tolerant once established, but also tolerates wet soggy soils for short periods. Tolerates salt spray and wind. Divide after five years or so if center of clump dies out. Easy, adaptable.

Use as vertical accent, in groups or drifts in garden borders, meadows, low hedges, screens, and rain gardens. Provides lovely color and texture in flower arrangements. Excellent companion for fall asters, sunflowers, etc.

Streamside buffers. Erosion Control.

Attracts over 25 native butterflies/moths. Larval host for Delaware Skipper, Dotted Skipper, Northern Broken Dash. Many song and game birds eat the seed. Provides excellent shelter and nesting habitat for birds, through winter.

Deer resistant.


Photos 3,4: Broken Arrow Nursery brokenarrownursery.com

Photo 6: R. Robert, Scott Arboretum, Swarthmore College scottarboretum.org/leveling-up-your-rain-garden/