



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Phlox subulata*¹

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Introduction

The plant goes unnoticed during the year because it blends in with the grass and other surrounding parts of the landscape until flowers emerge in late winter and spring (Fig. 1). It is one of the signals that spring has arrived. Flower colors vary from red and lavender to pink and white, depending on the cultivar grown. Plants grow no more than about 6-inches-tall forming thick clumps and a good ground cover. The stiff leaves are narrow growing to about 1-inch-long and perhaps to 1/16-inch wide.

General Information

Scientific name: *Phlox subulata*

Pronunciation: flocks sub-yoo-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): Creeping Phlox, Moss Pink, Moss Phlox

Family: *Polemoniaceae*

Plant type: perennial; annual; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 3B through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug

Planting month for zone 10: Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: native to North America

Uses: ground cover; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

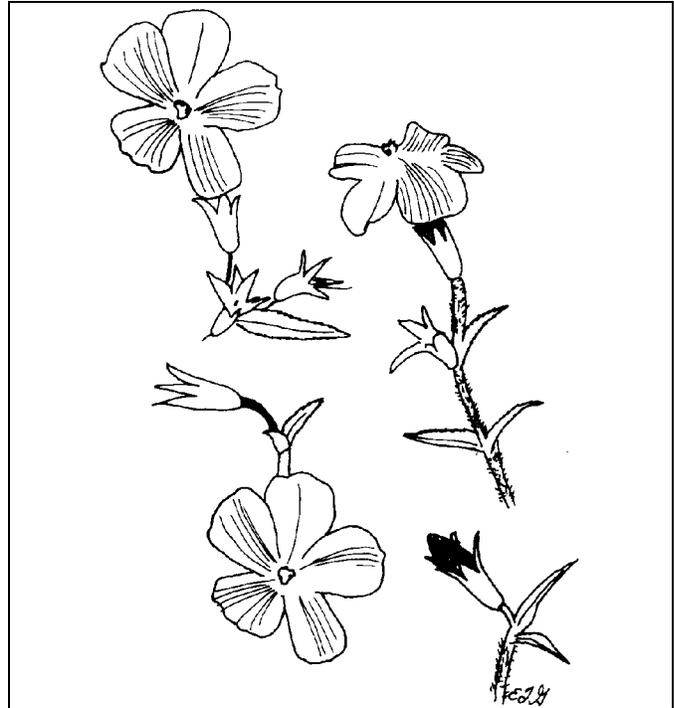


Figure 1. Creeping Phlox.

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading; prostrate (flat)

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** linear
- Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** not applicable
- Fall characteristic:** not applicable

Flower

- Flower color:** pink; lavender; white; red
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** unknown
- Fruit length:** unknown
- Fruit cover:** unknown
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig color:** reddish
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches

Other

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant
- Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Creeping Phlox is suitable for rock gardens, ground covers or for planting on top of a garden wall. Flowers and foliage will cascade down a container side making a nice compliment to an upright plant in the container. It makes a nice stabilizer for a sloping landscape.

Phlox should be located in the full sun for best growth. The plants benefit from fertilization, and from regular irrigation in dry weather during the growing season. Cut the foliage back after flowering to encourage denser growth and perhaps a weak second flower display.

Cultivars include: 'Crimson Beauty' - red flowers; 'Emerald Cushion' - pink flowers; 'Millstream' - white with a crimson eye; 'Millstream Daphne' - dark blue flowers; 'White Delight' - white flowers.

Propagation is by division of non-woody stems in early spring. Stem cuttings may be taken in summer or fall.

Pests and Diseases

Mites cause the foliage to lose its green color, especially in dry weather. Heavy infestations form fine webbing. Leaf spots attack the leaves. Remove infected leaves as noticed. Powdery mildew is the most common diseases on this plant. The disease causes a white powdery growth on the leaves. Crown rot may cause rotting near the soil line. A white fungal growth forms on the stem bases. Remove infected plants.