

Phlox

Phlox may seem like old school gardening, but butterflies don't seem to care! You can find a Phlox for almost every season and garden location to help provide a path for pollinators as they move through your landscape.

There are over 60 species of Phlox, most of which are native to North America (one from Siberia). There are tall species with thick, glossy leaves; and species that spread across the ground with needle-like leaves. Phlox can bloom in shady woods in April or be a midsummer sun-lover. Its flowers colors range from pale blue and violet, to pink, bright red and white.

The Phlox flower has a classic butterfly structure. It has flared petals that function as a landing pad for insects and a long narrow tube that is accessible to the long proboscis of butterflies, moths and skippers; long-tongued bumblebees; and hummingbirds. Most Phlox flowers are fragrant and many have "nectar guides" or dark marks around the corolla opening. But the Phlox's charms aren't restricted to daytime. The sweet scent and pale-colored or white star-shaped blossoms draw many moths even after dark.

A delicate-looking plant, Phlox blossoms occur in loose, rounded clusters. All forms of Phlox have flowers with five petals on a tubular base. The flowers are approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in width and extend laterally from the stem. The leaves of the Phlox genus are small, lanceolate, and oppositely arranged. The Phlox genus typically has a long blooming season, are easy to care for, multiply readily, and are good as cut flowers. Most Phlox are perennials.

However, because of its commercial desirability, Phlox has been significantly hybridized. So refer to the following list to select species that are native to Michigan. (This list was compiled from information on the websites of the US Department of Agriculture and University of Michigan "Herbarium".)

Sand or Cleft Phlox (*P. bifida*) Mat-forming phlox that grows only 6" tall. Spreads by trailing stems and self-seeding. Pale blue to almost white flowers. Each flower petal has a deep notch to 1/8" long. Blooms in May. Prefers well-drained, sandy or loamy soil. Full sun. Excellent for rock gardens or perennial borders. Listed on the State of Michigan's Threatened Species list.

Wild Blue or Woodland Phlox (*P. divaricata*) A valuable early-season source of nectar. This Midwest native has periwinkle-blue flowers and glossy, lance-like leaves. Forms slowly-spreading clumps that make a good ground cover to 18" high. Prefers humus-rich soil. Full to partial sun.

Annual Phlox (*P. drummondii*) Blooms from midsummer and into fall if deadheaded. Flower color ranges from white and cream, pinks, purples, reds to almost black. Prefers full sun, rich soil. Wild seed from this American species was first sent to Europe in 1835, where it was cultivated as a prized "exotic" for 150 years.

Wild-Sweet-William (*P. maculata*) Blooms in early summer with mounds of dark-pink blossoms. Prefers moist rich soil. Full sun or partial shade. If deadheaded, may bloom again in autumn. Listed on the State of Michigan's Threatened Species list.

Garden Phlox (*P. paniculata*) Native to the eastern half of the U.S. Reaches as high as 5 feet. Prefers rich well-drained soil. Full to partial sun. Blooms for several weeks from mid- to late

summer. Known to attract Swallowtails, Painted Ladies, Great Spangled Fritillaries, sulphurs and skippers. Easy to propagate from cuttings.

Prairie Phlox (*P. pilosa*) Robust, drought tolerant prairie native that prefers well-drained soils and full sun. Grows 1-2 ft. tall. Pale pink to lavender flowers bloom in late spring or early summer for 1–1½ months. Stems are upright and sometimes branch near the top. Leaves/stems are covered with hairs. Stems are sticky. This plant has a taproot.

Moss Phlox (*P. subulata*) A low plant forming moss-like mats with pink to lavender (rarely white) flowers in clusters at stem ends, collectively forming a continuous carpet of flowers. Leaves with flat blades.

More information on Phlox:

<http://butterflywebsite.com/articles/bggq/Phlox.htm>

<http://carolynsshadegardens.com/2012/04/10/native-phlox-for-your-garden/>

<http://michiganflora.net/genus.aspx?id=Phlox>

Information about pollinators and pollinator plants lists:

<http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm>

<http://www.pollinatorpathway.com/resources/plants>

All species found in Phlox

<u><i>Phlox bifida</i></u>	<u>SAND PHLOX, CLEFT PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox divaricata</i></u>	<u>WILD BLUE PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox drummondii</i></u>	<u>ANNUAL PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox maculata</i></u>	<u>WILD-SWEET-WILLIAM</u>
<u><i>Phlox nivalis</i></u>	<u>TRAILING PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox ovata</i></u>	<u>ALLEGHENY PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox paniculata</i></u>	<u>PERENNIAL PHLOX, GARDEN PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox pilosa</i></u>	<u>PRAIRIE PHLOX</u>
<u><i>Phlox subulata</i></u>	<u>MOSS-PINK, MOSS PHLOX</u>

Citation:

MICHIGAN FLORA ONLINE. A. A. Reznicek, E. G. Voss, & B. S. Walters. February 2011. University of Michigan. Web. January 19, 2014. <http://michiganflora.net/genus.aspx?id=Phlox>.