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How to Grow Phlox: The Complete Phlox Flower Guide



Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical Name:

Plant Type:

FREE GUIDE!

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Planting, Growing, and Caring

By Catherine Boeckmann

Last Updated: February 4, 2025



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If you spot low-growing blankets of flowers in bright pink in springtime, it's often Creeping Phlox! But there are medium and tall varieties of phlox as well, which grow in late spring and summer; these perennials are the cornerstone of many perennial flower beds. Learn all about growing phlox.

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About Phlox

“Phlox is a genus with a great diversity in growth form, with a height varying be-

grow in a low, mounding form, a spreading woodland phlox or tall, upright phlox," explains the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

These perennials sport copious star-shaped, colorful flowers from spring through summer, depending on the variety. Because there are so many types (many of which are native to North America), you can find a phlox for almost any garden. Truly, their versatility can't be overstated.

- **Low-growing Creeping Phlox** works great as ground cover in sunny yards.
- **Ankle-high Woodland Phlox** is perfect for dappled, shady beds.
- **Medium-height Garden Phlox** is often the 'backbone' of the perennial garden, providing a layer of color midway through the garden and filling in gaps.
- **Tall Garden Phlox** are excellent as a colorful backdrop with large flower clusters, and they are often fragrant.

deer-resistant, as deer do NOT like smelly flowers!

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PLANTING

Because there are so many different types of phlox, sunlight requirements vary. Tall garden phlox do best in full sun, while

(See **Recommended Varieties**, below, for more information!)

In general, phlox prefer soil that is nutrient rich and evenly moist. They do not like to sit in wet soil, however. Use a garden fork or tiller to prepare your garden bed prior to planting. Loosen the soil to about 12 to 15 inches deep, then mix in a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost to improve soil consistency and fertility.

When to Plant Phlox

- Plant phlox in the spring after the threat of frost has passed, or plant in the fall at least a month before your first frost.

How to Plant Phlox

- It is easier to grow phlox from cuttings/transplants than from seeds, although established plants will readily spread by seed in the garden.
- Space plants according to their mature size.
- If you are transplanting a plant from a

so that the top of the root ball is even with the soil's surface. Fill in around the root ball, and remember to water it thoroughly.



GROWING

- If you receive less than 1 inch of rain a week, remember to regularly water your plants throughout the summer.
- Each spring, put a thin layer of compost and a 2-inch layer of mulch around the plants to help keep the soil moist and control weeds.
- Remember to remove the dead/faded flowers so that your plants can rebloom. [Try out the Chelsea Chop!](#)
- If you have tall phlox, cut the stems back to about 1 to 2 inches above the

garden phlox every 2 to 3 years to ensure healthy and disease-free plants.

Types

You just can't go wrong with phlox! Here are some of the best species and varieties to try:

Low-Growing Phlox

- **Creeping phlox or moss phlox (*Phlox subulata*)** is a low-growing species that works excellently as a ground cover. It spreads slowly, growing in mounds that get 4–6 inches thick. The whole plant turns into a carpet of color in spring, when flowers cover every square inch of foliage. This phlox is particularly stunning when allowed to drape over a rock wall—imagine a waterfall of color! Creeping phlox grows best in well-drained soil and partial to full sun.
 - **'Candy Stripe'** is a popular variety with pink-and-white-striped flowers.
 - **'Emerald Blue'** produces a sea of



Creeping phlox (*P. subulata*) has needle-shaped leaves and produces a carpet of flowers.

- Phlox *stolonifera*, which also goes by the common names **creeping phlox** and **moss phlox**, is similar to *P. subulata* in name only. The main differences between it and *P. subulata* are that its leaves are oval-shaped (rather than needle-shaped), and its flowers are produced on stems that rise 6–10 inches above the foliage (rather than directly on the foliage). It prefers a shadier growing site with rich, evenly moist soil.
 - ‘Sherwood Purple’ is a delicate little phlox with purplish-pink flowers.
- **Woodland phlox** or **blue phlox** (*Phlox divaricata*) is another low-growing species. As its two common names

bluish flowers in early spring. Like *P. stolonifera*, its flowers bloom on stems that rise about a foot or so above the creeping foliage.

- ‘Chattahoochee’ and ‘Blue Moon’ are two great varieties with beautiful blue-to-violet flowers.



Blue phlox. *Phlox divaricata*. Credit:
L Lauzuma

Medium-Height Phlox

- **Annual phlox or Drummond’s phlox (*Phlox drummondii*)** grows as an annual rather than a perennial, unlike most other phlox species. Annual phlox rarely grows taller than 2 feet in height. Most varieties are not very heat tolerant, but in warmer regions, you may find the heat-tolerant varieties for sale. Plant in well-

Tall Phlox

- **Garden phlox or summer phlox** (*Phlox paniculata*) is the tallest phlox in cultivation and is probably the species that most folks have in their gardens. It grows in clumps that reach between 3 and 5 feet in height and produces panicles of flowers in mid- to late summer. Though tolerant of most lighting, it grows and flowers best in partial to full sun. It has a reputation for being very susceptible to powdery mildew, but resistant varieties are available.
 - ‘**David**’ has bright white flowers and is resistant to powdery mildew.
 - ‘**Jeana**’, another mildew-resistant variety, produces panicles of petite purplish flowers—similar in appearance to a butterfly bush.

Other Phlox

The phlox listed above are just a few of the many species out there. Others of interest to gardeners may be **Carolina**

spotted phlox (*P. maculata*), and **sand**

phlox (*P. bifida*).

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PESTS/DISEASES

- **Powdery mildew** is common; keep proper air circulation in mind when spacing out plants and avoid getting excess water on the foliage. Cutting back stems after flowering can also help to reduce the spread of powdery mildew, as can choosing mildew-resistant varieties.

- Stem nematodes
- Leaf spots
- Leaf miners
- Caterpillars

WIT AND WISDOM

- April's full Moon has traditionally been called the "Full Pink Moon" because it heralded the appearance of the "moss pink," or wild ground phlox—one of the first spring flowers.
- Medium and tall phlox are good companions for summer perennials such as lilies, bee balm, rudbeckia, Shasta daisies, yarrow, and clematis.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann

each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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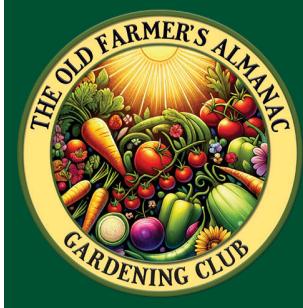
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COMMENTS

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Kaycy Conley-Gay (not verified) 8 months 3

weeks ago

My phlox seem to be finished with blooming.

Should I deadhead to reinvigorate blooming

since in Mid-Michigan we may have 2 more

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[REPLY](#)**Roger Smith (not verified)** 7

months 1 week ago

cutting back Phlox

[REPLY](#)**Gigi (not verified)** 9 months ago

Some of white phlox paniculata came up taller and bright pink this year. Is there a way to encourage the phlox to stay pink?

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 9 months ago

According to extension experts, some phlox blossom colors seem to change because the original plants are replaced over time by vigorous seedlings that have different blossom colors—typically pink or lavender. So,

[REPLY](#)

Deb Santoski (not verified) 11 months ago

Rabbits chewed off my phlox stems before they bloomed (very early June). Will they regrow and still bloom this season?

[REPLY](#)

Mary Campbell (not verified) 1 year 11

months ago

I planted my creeping phlox from plants about 4-5 years ago. Last year and worse this year they have started dying out from the center out. Is this normal or what can I do to keep them going. Love them. Thanks.

[REPLY](#)

Trevor Mabbitt (not verified) 1

year 1 month ago

First time growing so would appreciate your reply

REPLY

Edna Bailey (not verified) 1 year 11 months

ago

Can I take a transplant from a tall phlox while the plant is still growing? Can I dig a small transplant from the existing plant before it blooms?

REPLY

The Editors 1 year 11 months ago

Hi Edna,

It is a good idea to divide your phlox every 3 to 4 years. It will reinvigorate your plants.

Since tall phlox produces flowers in mid- to late summer, you can divide it in the spring before new growth begins. But since that time has already passed, you can divide it in the fall after the flowers have faded, but

When dividing, make sure each division has at least 2 or 3 shoots with roots attached.

REPLY

Sheila Bradford (not verified) 1 year 11

months ago

Can phlox spread if a landscape cloth is used and rocks put around them?

Thanks, Sheila

REPLY

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