Phlox is a wide-ranging North American native perennial and a common fixture in woodland, prairie, and meadow landscapes. Phlox are an easy to find wildflower stretching from Florida and Quebec to Alaska. One of the classic American perennials, this was one of the earliest North American natives to enter cultivation. With vibrant flower colors and blooms lasting many weeks, it is easy to understand what caught the eye of so many gardeners through the years.

Although there is great variation within the genus, a tubular flower with five petals is common in all types. Flower color varies between white, pink, magenta, purple, and blue across the genus, with some species showing notable orange or red coloration. All species are popular with pollinators.
Basic types

Phlox is a genus with a multitude of species, heights, bloom times, and garden applications. Many of these species are unrecognizable to the average gardener but becoming more common in new interspecific hybrids. Through all of the diversity, perennial Phlox can be loosely grouped into two types: Spring bloomers and summer bloomers.

Spring Bloomers (Creeping/Groundcover types)
Phlox subulata (Creeping Phlox, Moss Pinks) and other early-spring blooming species are low growing, ground-hugging plants. Typically native to rocky, well-drained environments, when put in a garden without restriction they become carpets of color. Most of these types tend to spread and work well as groundcovers.

Summer Bloomers (Tall Garden Phlox and related types)
When referring to Phlox, most first think of Tall Garden Phlox (Phlox paniculata). This clump-forming perennial blooms in midsummer and is among the tallest of the Phlox species. Also characteristic of Tall Garden Phlox are the perfectly formed large, rounded flower panicles that top each stem.

In addition to Tall Garden Phlox, summer blooming species (including Phlox glaberrima and Phlox pilosa to name a few) are becoming more common, particularly in interspecific hybrids. Hybrid garden Phlox tend to bloom a bit earlier, have a more mounded shape, and a stoloniferous habit. Also characteristic of summer bloomers is a propensity to rebloom after the first flush of flowers, particularly when trimmed back.
GARDENING TIPS

The first thing to consider when siting a Phlox in your garden is the soil. All Phlox do well in a sandy loam soil that has good drainage. Clay can be the kiss of death for Phlox as they struggle to root in heavy soils. One good workaround for clay soil is to build a raised bed and fill it with a more neutral soil. The extra height will also improve the drainage and create an optimal growing environment.

Consistent watering is helpful for plants trying to get established. Creeping Phlox have low water requirements once settled in, only needing supplemental water when the days are at their hottest and longest in summer. Tall Garden Phlox thrive with consistent watering. Adequate moisture will also help to prolong flowering and encourage rebloom.

Overhead watering will increase the amount of moisture on the foliage, increase the humidity around the plants, and increase the presence of mildew affecting the plant. Mildew manifests as a white fuzz on the surface of the leaf that is both unsightly and will negatively affect the long-term health of the plant. Try to avoid wet foliage and water in the morning. It is best to water Phlox with a hose at the base of the plant or with drip irrigation. Drip irrigation helps to keep the soil wet and the foliage dry.

Summer blooming Phlox can be encouraged to rebloom with consistent watering, adequate nutrients, and some deadheading. However, once Creeping Phlox (Phlox subulata) have finished flowering for the year, there isn’t anything you can do to get more flowers. Some of the spring species will have sporadic rebloom, but nothing close to when they were in peak.

Full sun is the best growing environment for Phlox. With too much shade, Creeping Phlox do not grow as dense and can melt away over time. Tall Garden Phlox are more tolerant of light shade and do well in it, but when situated in full sun they tend to bloom more, have sturdier habits, and experience less powdery mildew.