**Phlox subulata** Creeping Phlox, Moss Pink

Edward F. Gilman and Carol Lord

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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 an inch long and perhaps to 1/16 inch wide.

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**General Information**

Scientific name: *Phlox subulata*

Pronunciation: flocks sub-yoo-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): creeping phlox, moss pink, moss phlox

Family: Polemoniaceae

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**Description**

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading; prostrate (flat)

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Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

**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

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**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 complement 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 you notice them.

Powdery mildew is the most common disease 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.