

Chicagoland Grows,[®] Inc.

Plant Introduction Program - Plant Release Bulletin #48

Perfectly Puzzling Phlox *Phlox* 'Perfectly Puzzling' PP31,487

Phlox 'Perfectly Puzzling' is so named because it is puzzling that it produces flowers in three different colors: white, light raspberry-violet, or medium-dark raspberry-violet. The different flower colors are randomly produced on any given plant, and it is attractive in all color forms. 'Perfectly Puzzling' is a well-behaved and durable moss phlox selection that blooms for four weeks, commencing in mid-April to early May in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5). At peak bloom, the blooms cover the plants completely. The petite 0.6-inch-wide flowers are star-shaped with narrow petals and cleft petal tips. Like many moss phlox, 'Perfectly Puzzling' forms a low-spreading mound that strongly layers in as it spreads. Never more than 4 to 5 inches tall in our trials, test plants grew to 15 inches wide after two years and 18 inches wide after three years. The trial plants eventually grew together to form a continuous ground cover. Hardy to USDA Zones 4-8.



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Perfectly Puzzling Phlox

***Phlox* 'Perfectly Puzzling'**
PP31,487

Botanical Name

Phlox 'Perfectly Puzzling'

Common Name

Perfectly Puzzling Phlox

Family

Polemoniaceae (*Phlox* family)

Origin

Open-pollinated seed was collected in 2009 from the diminutive, white-flowered selection *Phlox* 'Ellie B.', which is thought to be a hybrid between *Phlox subulata* and *Phlox bifida*. The pollen parent was likely a *Phlox subulata* selection, as many cultivars of moss phlox were growing nearby. 'Perfectly Puzzling' was selected as it bloomed in April of 2012. Careful study of individual flowers led us to observe that no one flower transitions through all three colors. Two rounds of vegetative propagation convinced us that this selection is actually a chimera of sorts, as the three flower colors can appeared in random patterns on the propagules. The medium raspberry color may dominate over time.

Hardiness

USDA Zones 4-7

Bloom Season

This selection blooms for four weeks, commencing in mid-April to early May (weather-dependent) in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5). At peak bloom, the blossoms cover the plants completely.

Plant Habit

Like many moss phlox, this selection forms a low-spreading mound that strongly layers in as it spreads. The needlelike, 0.8-inch-long foliage is moderately yellow-green in all growing season and semi-deciduous most winters.

Size

Three-year-old plants measured 4 inches tall and 18 inches wide in trials in northern Illinois.

Growth Rate

A moderate grower, comparable in growth to other moss phlox.

Ornamental Characteristics

The diminutive, starry flowers are attractive in any of the three colors that may appear. The unpredictable pattern of the flower colors adds to its charm. Enjoy its early spring bloom, and well-behaved, needlelike summer foliage. Despite the smaller-sized flowers than is usual for a moss *phlox*, the plants will be covered completely by the blossoms at peak boom. Expect a full month of floral display.

Culture

Both full sun and a well-drained soil are recommended. Drought-tolerant once established. If properly sited, it should spread over time, making a low-growing ground cover. Otherwise, maintenance is minimal, and no pruning is necessary. The foliage may be deciduous in severe winters, but it will renew itself each spring.

Pest and Disease Problems

Unlike the summer-blooming phlox (*Phlox maculata* and *Phlox paniculata*), this and other moss phlox are not beset by powdery mildew or browsed by deer or rabbits.

Landscape Value

Use this multi-hued selection in full sun toward the front of the perennial border, in the rock garden, on slopes, over stone walls, between pavers, and in similar sites. Mass it as a ground cover for a striking spring floral display.

Propagation

Easy to root from shoot tip cuttings taken from the vegetative growth that commences as flowering is finishing in early to mid-June.

Chicagoland Grows® is a nonprofit corporation of the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Morton Arboretum, and the Ornamental Growers Association of Northern Illinois (OGA). The Chicagoland Grows® Plant Introduction Program is dedicated to the evaluation, selection, production, and marketing of recommended and new plant cultivars. Plants selected for the program have proven to be adaptable to the Midwest and are made available to the commercial and retail landscape industry through an international network of growers and propagators.

For more information about Chicagoland Grows®, contact the Plant Introduction Program, Chicago Botanic Garden 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022 (847) 835-8309 jault@chicagobotanic.org chicagolandgrows.org/index.php

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