



CHICAGOLAND GROWS[®], INC.

Plant Introduction Program - Plant Release Bulletin #38

Violet Pinwheels Phlox

Phlox 'Violet Pinwheels'^{PPAF}

Phlox 'Violet Pinwheels' is a new direction in moss phlox breeding, combining the best traits of two lesser-known species, *Phlox bifida* and *Phlox kelseyi*. Blooming commences in early to mid-April in northern Illinois, well ahead of many other spring-blooming plants in the garden. The vibrant purple to violet flowers cover the low-growing and spreading plants for four to six weeks. Tolerates drought once established and also saline and alkaline soils. Selected from a hybrid cross made at the Chicago Botanic Garden in 2008. A real attention getter in early spring!



Chicagoland Grows[®] is a nonprofit corporation of the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Morton Arboretum, and the Ornamental Growers Association of Northern Illinois (OGA).

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Violet Pinwheels Phlox

Phlox 'Violet Pinwheels' PPAF



Botanical Name

Phlox 'Violet Pinwheels' PPAF

Common Name

Violet Pinwheels Phlox

Family

Polemoniaceae

Origin

Derived from a cross between *Phlox bifida* and *Phlox kelseyi* 'Lemhi Purple', *Phlox bifida* is a midwestern species with lobed light blue or white flowers that grows on sandy soils or on limestone outcrops. *Phlox kelseyi*, with its violet to purple flowers, grows on highly alkaline and saline desert soils in Idaho and Montana. An intriguing marriage of east and west! Selected in 2010 from a cross made in 2008 at the Chicago Botanic Garden by Jim Ault, Ph.D.

Hardiness

This selection is hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 7.

Bloom Season

This selection covers itself with ¾-inch-wide, vibrant purple to violet flowers for four to six weeks beginning in early to mid-April and continuing into mid-May, then lightly repeat-blooms from August through October in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5b).

Plant Habit

An herbaceous groundcover that forms a low, spreading mound of creeping fine stems and needle-like, soft leaves around ¾-inch in length. The foliage is green all growing season and semideciduous most winters.

Size

Three-year-old plants measured 4 inches tall and 19 inches wide in trials in northern Illinois.

Growth Rate

A moderate grower, comparable in growth to other moss phlox (*P. subulata*, *P. nivalis*).

Ornamental Characteristics

Enjoy its vibrant purple to violet flowers in early spring when so few other plants are in bloom; yet its bloom season is so long it will still flower magnificently into mid- and late spring. You will also be rewarded by the occasional rebloom through the summer and fall. The slightly upturned, notched, brilliantly colored flowers truly are unique among all the spring-blooming moss phlox.

Culture

Both full sun and a well-drained soil are recommended. Drought-tolerant once established. This selection will thrive on a high pH soil and should also be very tolerant of deicing salts. If properly sited it should spread over time, making a low-growing groundcover. Otherwise, maintenance is minimal, and no pruning is ever necessary. Foliage will be deciduous most winters but 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 striking 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 groundcover for a striking spring floral display. It is tolerant of high pH and deicing salts, which lends its use by walkways and streets, or in sites that are naturally high in pH or salinity.

Propagation

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

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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 Department, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022, (847) 835-8301 or visit chicagolandgrows.org.