

# Rethinking Phlox, Part I

APRIL 1999 by Joan Sargent

I don't see enough of our native woodlander, Phlox divaricata in my garden or in the gardens of other people. What a shame! These sensible plants have good low-growing semi-evergreen foliage, they creep along in shade or in part shade and their flowers of blue or white grow about 10 inches tall. They can easily be pulled apart to make large clumps after a few years. A trowel full of humus, leafmold or cow manure in the planting hole, and as mulch, will get them off to a good start. So why don't we all see them? Let's get started with 'Dirigo ice', a soft blue; "Laphamii", a darker blue with star-shaped flowers; or 'Fuller's White'.

Good combinations might include our native Iris cristata in white or dark blue, in front and my favorite bleeding heart, Dicentra spectabilis alba behind. You might prefer them with a late daffodil, I like Pipit for my white and Yellow Cheerfulness, both of these are fragrant and will naturalize well.

You don't have to have a large garden to use Phlox, these forgiving plants will fit anywhere. Try them under a blooming tree or shrub, any place you need a lift in the Spring!

[Ed. note: We have tried to find photos of each for reference.]

**Joan Sargent**, a longtime member and master gardener who passed away in August 2012; wrote about 24 gardening columns through the years for our newsletter. We are reprinting them again.



Above: *Dicentra spectabilis*--Bleeding Heart, in pink or white, makes a great early backdrop to phlox and bulbs.

Top right : *Phlox divaricata*, aka Woodland phlox is a spreading native wildflower. Blooms- Apr-May.

Middle: *Phlox 'Dirigo Ice'*, faint ice blue blooms, quite fragrant.

Bottom: *MaryHelen Phlox divaricata*. Lush, companion to daffodils and Muscari. Ground cover, plant over bulbs--edges out weeds. Light shade, well drained rich soil.