

Wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)

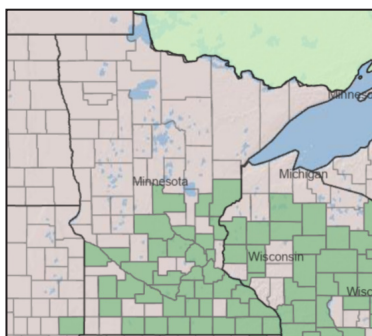
Family: Phlox (Polemoniaceae)

DESCRIPTION: Wild blue phlox, also called woodland phlox, is a native perennial that thrives in shaded woodlands. It blooms between April and June, producing flowers that range from pale blue and lavender to reddish-purple, and occasionally white. Phlox comes from the Greek word for “fire,” or “flame,” referring to its flower shape.

USES: An important early spring nectar source, the plant supports pollinators, including **swallowtail butterflies** (pictured), bees and hummingbirds. Its deep taproot helps to break up compacted soil and stabilize upland streambanks. Indigenous Tribes historically used the plant to treat stomach and intestinal diseases; steeped roots were used as an eyewash.

REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Seasons](#)
[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
[University of Wisconsin-Madison Horticulture Extension](#)
[Indiana Native Plants](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Planting Recommendations

This hardy, shade-tolerant perennial prefers well-drained soil with consistent root moisture, and becomes drought-resistant once established. Ideal for woodland gardens or shaded rock beds, it provides vibrant color in early spring before setting seed. It pairs well with Jack-in-the-pulpit and trillium, which share similar bloom times, and it complements other shade-tolerant plants such as ferns, lungwort and columbine. This species grows relatively

tall and thrives in open habitats. Though it can serve as ground cover, it spreads gradually compared with other phlox varieties. Cross-pollination by long-tongued insects, including butterflies and bees, is required for seed production. The plant readily self-sows. Propagation methods include dividing roots in the spring or early fall, taking stem cuttings in spring or root cuttings in early fall, or sowing seeds in spring or mid-summer.

STATEWIDE

WETLAND

INDICATOR STATUS:
GP, MW, NCNE: FACU

ID: Clusters of pale blue to reddish-purple flowers top plants growing 9 to 18 inches tall. Individual flowers grow about 1 inch wide, with five petals fused at the base into a long, slender, trumpet-shaped tube that contains the reproductive organs, the petals then flaring into rounded or slightly indented tips. Opposite leaves attach directly to the stem. Pointed at the tip and rounded at the base, they grow up to 2 inches long and a half-inch wide. Leaves are toothless and finely hairy. After flowering stems die back, the plant can be mistaken for a weed.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

The non-native Dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) often forms dense monocultures; its flowers are brighter pink, with four petals. Prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*) prefers sunny, well-drained sites; its flowers are smaller.

Developed by **Al Henderson**, Rice Soil and Water Conservation District resource specialist



Photo Credits: Heather Holm