

SAXIFLORA

PLATE 9

Phlox stolonifera

(*Polemoniaceae*)

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"We are informed by Mr. John Fraser, of Sloane-Square, Chelsea, that he first discovered this plant in Georgia, in the year 1786, together with *Phlox pilosa*, *P. setacea* and *P. subulata*, but that living plants were not brought to Europe till 1801, his sixth voyage to North America on botanical researches, in company with his son.

"It promises to be a valuable addition to our gardens, particularly calculated for ornamenting rock-work, being, we are assured, perfectly hardy in our climate, although the specimen from which our drawing was made last Summer was flowered in the stove."

So wrote John Sims, M.D., Fellow of the Linnean Society, in presenting this *Phlox* to the botanical world in 1802. The excellent plate accompanying his description shows that the original plant had a corolla of a deep violet-blue color. The same species was collected by Michaux "in excelsis montibus Carolinae occidentalis" and named by him *Phlox reptans*; that he had a similar color-form is shown by his characterization of the corolla as "amoene coerulea." Although the Michaux species name is widely used among horticulturists, the rule of priority requires adoption of the Sims name, since this was published a year earlier.

This *Phlox* is one of the most outstanding members of the genus in ease of culture and beauty of flower. Native in the open woodlands of the Appalachians and foothills—spreading from a dispersal-center in West Virginia to central Pennsylvania, southern Ohio, and northern Georgia—it is adaptable to a wide range of climatic conditions. Its soil is most frequently subacid, and it thrives best, yielding the finest floral display, in a partly-shaded, non-limy rock garden. The plant produces runners which root at the nodes to form new plants, and it can accordingly be readily propagated by cuttings of these stems. In favorable situations, it spreads into mats, which in May become bedecked with large flowers of most charming delicacy of coloring. While the form originally found by both Fraser and Michaux had violet flowers, and has been named *violacea* (or less correctly *coerulea*), purple color-forms are more frequent in nature. There are also a number of lovely lavender and lilac ones, which will, no doubt, some day receive horticultural names and find their way into many rock gardens.

Phlox stolonifera is an herbaceous perennial with evergreen spatulate leaves on the sterile shoots; these shoots, at first more or less erect, become prostrate, take root at the nodes, and form new plants, ultimately developing extensive matted colonies. The herbage is pubescent, the hairs being

pointed at the base of the plant, and gland-tipped upward. In spring, erect stems arise to a height of five to ten inches, bearing sparse oblong leaves and a terminal cyme of a few large salver-form flowers. The calyx is composed of five sepals united for about half their length into a tube, and terminally broad-subulate. The corolla-tube is about an inch long and is sparsely pubescent; the five lobes are usually obovate and entire or barely emarginate at the tip. In color the corolla-face ranges from light violet—to many eyes, seeming almost blue—through a series of lavender and lilac hues to phlox-purple; around the tube-orifice an eye of somewhat deeper hue is occasionally developed. As in all Phloxes, the five stamens are irregular; and in this species, the anthers of one or more of them are exerted, their golden color contrasting with that of the corolla. The pistil is tricarpellate, with a compound style equalling or exceeding the corolla-tube in length, tipped by the three stigmas. Viable seeds are rarely produced, the species being maintained largely by vegetative reproduction.

EDGAR T. WHERRY.

Phlox stolonifera Sims in Curtis' Bot. Mag. 16: pl. 563. 1802.

Phlox reptans Michaux, Flora Bor.-Amer. 1: 145. 1803.

Phlox obovata Muhlenberg ex Willdenow Enum. Pl. Hort. Reg. Berol. 201. 1809.

Phlox prostrata Aiton, Hort. Kew. ed. 2, 1: 326. 1810.

Phlox crassifolia Loddiges, Bot. Cab. 16: pl. 1596. 1829.

Phlox stolonifera crassifolia Don, in Sweet's Brit. Flow. Gard. ser. 2, 3: pl. 293. 1835; earliest under-specific name for the purple color-form.

Phlox procumbens coerulea Hort. ex Crockett, Amer. Bot. 30: 159. 1924; not *P. procumbens* Lehmann.

Phlox stolonifera forma *violacea* Peattie, Journ. El. Mitch. Sci. Soc. 45: 266. 1930; earliest valid under-specific name for the typical *i.e.*, original, violet color-form.

FOOTNOTE: The drawing from which plate was made is the work of Miss Inez Renninger of Philadelphia, being one of the illustrations prepared by her for the forthcoming Flora of Pennsylvania, under W.P.A. project No. 16659 and is published through the courtesy of the Department of Botany of the University of Pennsylvania.