'David' Phlox

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Additional index words. *Phlox paniculata*, Polemoniaceae, garden phlox

Phlox paniculata (*P. decussata* Lyon ex Pursh) is commonly called perennial garden or summer phlox. A clump-forming herbaceous perennial, it grows 1–2 m high. Leaves are elliptic to elliptic-lanceolate or ovate, thin, veiny, and ≤15 cm long (Bailey, 1976). It is native from New York to Georgia and west to Illinois and Arkansas. Because this species is not heat tolerant, it performs better in the northern rather than the southern United States. Heat and humidity decrease vigor and increase susceptibility to root rots. Many selections have been introduced over the years, with at least 18 cultivars listed in catalogs such as Sunny Border Nurseries (Kensington, Corm.) and consumer perennial references such as *Herbaceous Perennial Plants* (Armitage, 1989).

One of the main problems with this species is powdery mildew (*Erysiphe cichoracearum*

DC.). Cultivars less susceptible to powdery mildew and chemicals that control this disease are available (Daughtrey et al., 1993). Low susceptibility to powdery mildew was one trait leading to the selection of 'David', especially because several other commonly planted white cultivars, notably 'Mt. Fuji' and 'White Admiral', may be highly prone to powdery mildew. 'David' is also noteworthy because of its larger flower clusters, longer bloom period, stronger stems that resist toppling and thus do not need staking, and greater height than most cultivars.

Origin

'David' was selected from a population planted in beds in the parking lot of the Brandywine Conservancy, Brandy wine, Pa., by Richard Simon (grower and owner of Bluemount Nurseries, Monkton, Md.) and F.M. Mooberry (former horticulture coordinator, Brandywine Conservancy) in Aug. 1987. This population had been grown from native open-pollinated seed collected by the Conservancy in the Brandywine Valley from unnamed varieties. 'David' was named after David Mooberry and given to us for subsequent evaluation and propagation. No further crosses or selection were made.

Description

'David' is a vigorous herbaceous perennial averaging 1 m in height, less in dry or sandy soils and more in moist or loamy soils. Leaves are elliptic, glossy, dark green, and ≤15 cm long. Subtly sweet-fragrant flowers are 15–25 cm long panicles with individual pure-white florets 2–3 cm in diameter. Bloom is possible for up to 6 weeks from terminal followed by lateral flowers, depending on microclimate. The average blooming date is August and September in U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) hardiness zones 4–6. 'David' is hardy in USDA zones 4–9. In replicated hardiness studies of phlox cultivars in South Burlington, Vt., (USDA zone 4) over 3 years, 'David' proved intermediate in hardiness among the cultivars studied, with some death in severe winters with ice and little snow cover (unpublished data). In replicated studies for powdery mildew susceptibility in Burlington, Vt., and Long Island, N. Y., 'David' was among the best of 35 cultivars examined, with <20% of upper leaf surface area covered with this disease (Daughtrey et al., 1993).

Availability

Plants are generally propagated by stem cuttings or root divisions and are available in cell flats and containers 27.5 cm. Contact S.A.A as a source or L.P.P. for a list of other sources.

Literature Cited

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Received for publication 6 Nov. 1993. Accepted for publication 7 Dec. 1993. We appreciate the support of Perennial Plant Assn., New England Greenhouse Conference, and Vermont Plantsmen Assn. The cost of publishing this paper was defrayed in part by the payment of page charges. Under postal regulations, this paper therefore must be hereby marked *advertisement* solely to indicate this fact.

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