

Rethinking Phlox, Part II

MAY 1999 by Joan Sargent

For years I tried to rid my garden of *Phlox paniculata*, the tall border Phlox, their mildewed foliage threw a pall on the late summer garden and I thought I could do without them. Still nothing quite took the place of these old favorites and so for the last few summers I have been testing Phlox in my cutting garden, half a dozen varieties, old and new to see how mildew resistant those that claim to be really are.

My number one favorite has been 'Katherine', first offered by Viettes Nursery in 1927, a mauve with a white eye and wonderfully fragrant. 'David', a newer white did well and 'Bright Eyes' a smaller variety both in flower and stature, rose pink with a darker eye, came through unscathed. A taller light purple 'Laura' is quite late blooming but equally beguiling.

I would never consider Phlox to be totally trouble-free, they do need to be dead-headed, divided every few years and thrive on good soil, need mulch and hate getting too dry. Your August and September garden will surprise you with a new charm and fragrance and give you plenty of flowers to cut if you are willing to give Phlox a second look.

Ed. note: THE CHELSEA CHOP!

Joan hosted a garden walk in her garden in 2008 for some NCBL members. It was then that we learned one of her 'techniques'. She had tall Phlox and *Rudebeckia* under her kitchen window. She said at the end of May, after the Chelsea Flower Show, in England, she would come out and chop off the top third to half the height of the plants- The Chelsea Chop!.... Then she said, the plants would make more branches of flowers heads for more late summer blooming.

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.



Joan Sargent in pink top on the far right, in her garden.

Clockwise from top right:
- *Phlox paniculata*, most common one.

-Phlox 'David', white plumes.

-Phlox 'Bright Eyes', blush pink with darker eye.

-Phlox 'Katherine', her favorite in lavender with white eye.

-Phlox 'Peppermint Twist', saw it online- what fun!

