

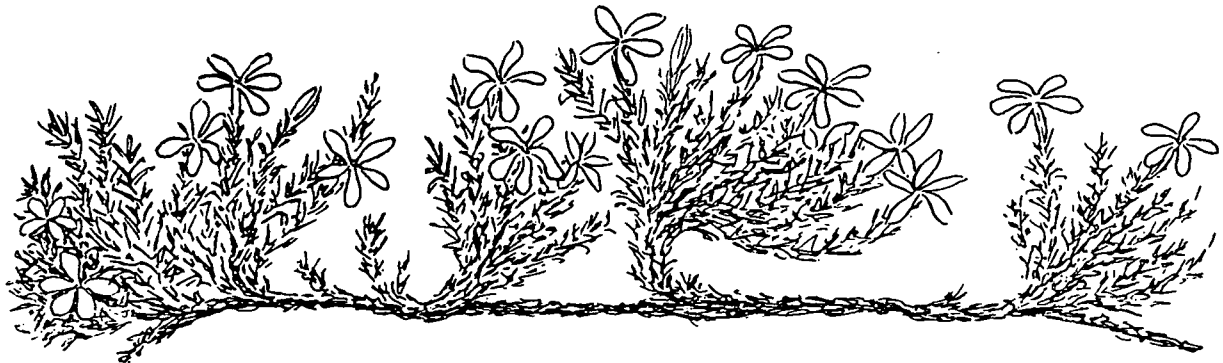
# Phlox

(*Phlox diffusa*)

Where does it grow? In April or May look closely in dry, open, rocky places in eastern Oregon and you will usually find a patch of phlox growing in the sunlight close to the ground and nestled against a rock. The prickly leaved species are described here, because they grow on the dry Oregon ranges, but there are other kinds of phlox, some wild, some cultivated for garden flowers.

Is it important? The phlox found on western ranges have little forage value since cattle and sheep seldom graze them.

What does it look like? It is a low-growing plant usually found in a thick mat. The branches lie close to the ground and are woody, like sagebrush and rabbitbrush. Put your hand down on the mat and you are likely to jerk it away because the tip of each leaf is sharp as a pin.



Phlox forms dense mats on the ground and have pretty flowers, usually pink in Oregon.

## Description:

Length of life -- Perennial.

Height -- Usually 2 to 4 inches tall.

Growth period -- Early spring to late summer. Will bloom from midspring to midsummer.

How does it spread? -- Mainly by woody, running stems or branches from a single root and by seeds.

Leaves -- The leaves are quite small, narrow, and mostly about 1/4 inch long. The leaves have tips as sharp as pin points. If you press your hand on them, they will stick you.

Leaves are fastened to the stem or branch alone, in pairs, threes, and sometimes more.



Flowers -- Are on the tips of the branches. Flower color will range from white to blue, purplish to reddish or pink. Pink is most frequent in Oregon.

Seeds -- The seeds are golden colored and are about the size of a small wheat kernel. They are fat and smooth and have a tiny spike on the end. Usually only one seed is produced in each flower. When the seed is ripe, it falls out and leaves an open pod with 5 points like a star. The inside of the star is light yellow or white. Seed cup is star-shaped.

Does it resemble anything else? A young plant resembles a miniature rabbitbrush. It has woody stems and branches like rabbitbrush, but they grow flat on the ground instead of standing straight up. No other plant makes such a dense mat, prickly to the touch, resembling heather a little. But heather does not grow on the arid ranges. No rainfall area in Oregon is too dry for some form of Phlox.



Seed pod, closed  
(x5).



Seed pod, open,  
and star-shaped.  
(x2).



Seed resembles  
small kernel of  
wheat (x8).