

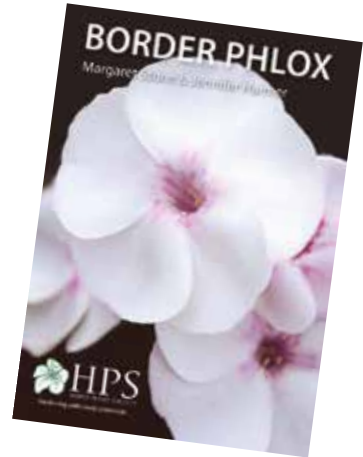
# Book Review

## **Border Phlox**

**Margaret Stone & Jennifer Harmer**

**A new full-colour 76-page booklet**

£5.50 for members; £7.50 for non-members inc. p&p



As a proud owner of all the original HPS booklets, I knew it was going to take something quite special to replace this particular canon of knowledge, gleaned from generations of Hardy Planters' experience. The booklets are at once concise, affordable and bursting with information, and the titles cover several large and popular genera. After sampling the newest product, I'm glad to tell you that I haven't been disappointed.

Having made a splendid start with her updated *Geraniums* and *Pulmonarias* booklets, Dr Margaret Stone has gone on to produce a welcome treatise on border phlox, incorporating much of Jennifer Harmer's original material on their history and cultivation. As the name indicates, this new version concentrates on sturdy plants for the border: mainly forms of *Phlox paniculata*. Nearly 400 varieties are listed, giving breeder and date, where known; colour; height; season of flowering; and much anecdotal information.

The new generation of booklets are fully illustrated in colour, and give the best opportunity for identification that phlox enthusiasts have had to date. However, as the authors point out, the tendency of phlox flowers to change colour according to temperature and time of day can still make identification a challenge. Add to that unnamed garden seedlings, and the difficulty of accurately reproducing reds and pinks in photographs, and you'll understand why the naming of phlox cultivars can sometimes be tricky.

To anyone asking for a reason why they should grow phlox in their borders, the booklet provides a simple answer: August. Many of us struggle with colour and substance in the August garden, and phlox provide the perfect solution. With an upright habit, a wide colour range and an incomparable perfume, there's a phlox for everyone. For me, it's always been the deep reds and purples, but Margaret shows that there are many new temptations on offer. The old scourge of eelworm is now rarely encountered, and a lot of newer cultivars are mildew resistant. One interesting tip the booklet shares is that if your soil is dry, only water the ground around your phlox, as wetting the leaves can invite the very mildew you're trying to avoid.

This is an excellent read, giving a clear and well-rounded depiction of a much-loved garden plant. It will take its place on my bookshelf, becoming as well-thumbed as its precursor. If I have one small regret, it is that there wasn't room for the list of nurseries, specialists and display gardens that have featured in previous booklets, though this is perhaps less of an issue in a digital age, as written lists tend to go out of date.

Gill Mullin