



'Fancy Feelings'

A conspicuous highlight of the mid-summer border, paniculata-type phlox are usually identified by their large clusters of brightly colored, often fragrant, disc-shaped flowers. Rarely does a new introduction come along that changes the established norm — that is, until Dutch hybridiser René van Gaalen gets involved. The man who brought us 'Goldmine', with its gold-edged foliage and rich, magenta flowers, has produced the Feelings series, which relies on large, colored bracts instead of flowers for decoration. Aside from providing a great discussion point, these plants have the advantage of holding their color and form for as long as 10 weeks, long after petals would have faded and dropped.

Several varieties with different bract forms and colors have been developed. 'Empty Feelings' (rust), 'Midnight Feelings' (mahogany-black) and a new lime-green variety have seemingly dispensed with flowers altogether. They all have needle-fine bracts that are continually produced throughout the summer to form ever-denser plumes. 'Natural Feelings', 'Red Feelings' and 'Fancy Feelings' have inconspicuous, sterile flowers hidden within brightly colored decorative bracts in various formations. Natural Feelings has fascinating, multi-colored bracts and a sweet fragrance, while the ruby bracts of Red Feelings intensify in color as the weeks go by. Fancy Feelings is the brightest-colored variety with star-shaped, bright-pink bracts; it will be introduced in 2004. Given René's track record, it shouldn't be surprising to hear that a variegated variety is also in the pipeline! All varieties in the Feelings series are protected by plant breeders' rights.

Culture Tips for

Phlox paniculata Feelings

You'll want this phlox for its large, colored bracts and its long-lasting color and form.

By Miriam Young

GROWING ON

Field-grown roots should be potted in winter while temperatures remain below 50° F. Use a natural potting medium with good drainage that doesn't dry out too easily. Soil pH should be between 6-8, while the EC value should be as low as possible, between 0.5 and 2.0.

Plants should be positioned where they will receive plenty of light and not crowded too close together, as this restricts the amount of light and air available.

Paniculata roots prefer a dry start, but once the shoots emerge, usually around the beginning of March, it is very important to ensure the soil has constant moisture, as the plants will weaken if they are allowed to dry out. At the other end of the scale, though, soggy soil will also not be appreciated, as this will invite fungal diseases.

Once the first shoots have appeared, phlox grow fast and eat a lot, so fertilizer should be given every 2-3 weeks, unless a slow-release type is used.

Flower induction in the Feelings series begins when temperatures rise above 59° F in combina-

tion with 14-16 daylight hours. Plants can be expected to be in flower at the end of May.

DISEASES

Mildew is famed as phlox's biggest enemy. The Feelings series is less troubled by it than most, but steps can always be taken to discourage it. Well-growing plants are less likely to be attacked, and the best way to ensure this is to make sure that the soil never dries out and that plants have enough food. Allowing enough space between plants for air to circulate and for all foliage to receive adequate light is also essential.

Phlox is also susceptible to Verticillium and Pythium, which are both fungal diseases best discouraged by having well-drained soil. Bud and leaf nematodes can be kept at bay by use of the appropriate insecticide/nematicide. 

Miriam Young is responsible for public relations and marketing at Darwin Plants. She may be contacted by phone at (888) 224-5008 or E-mail at myoung@darwinplants.com.



'Midnight Feelings'