



## The GCA Plant of the Year: Montine McDaniel Freeman Medal

The Freeman Medal was established to highlight underutilized, but highly worthy North American native plants: trees, shrubs, ground covers, vines, and perennials. The goal is to encourage their use in the landscape and make them familiar to gardeners and more available in nurseries.

To learn more visit <https://www.gcamerica.org/gca-awards-plant-of-the-year>.

### Why native plants?

Restoring native plant habitat is vital to preserving biodiversity. Native plants, once established, are generally economical since they are low-maintenance and require far less water, conserving natural resources. They provide vital habitat for birds, protective shelter for many mammals and many other species of wildlife.

### A few previous winners:



**The 2022 Winner:** *Phlox divaricata* 'Blue Moon', commonly known as woodland phlox has been named the 2022 Plant of the Year by The Garden Club of America. Annually, the GCA identifies a stellar North American native plant to receive the Montine McDaniel Freeman Medal: GCA Plant of the Year. Native plants are important because they adapt to local environmental conditions. They require far less water, saving time, and money. Plus, native plants provide vital food sources and habitat for many pollinator insects, birds, and other species of wildlife. *Phlox divaricata* 'Blue Moon' was discovered by William Cullina, Executive Director of the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, while he was working at the New England Wildflower Society. "It's a champ" was the sentiment from this year's Freeman Medal selection committee of distinguished horticulturists. *Phlox divaricata* 'Blue Moon' is mildew resistant with vibrant blue long lasting blooms along with winter interest. The cultivar 'Blue Moon' has the largest petals of any of the *Phlox divaricata* cultivars with fragrant, billowy tufts of lilac-blue flowers throughout April and May creating a spectacular and long-lasting show in early spring. The 2022 Freeman medal winner is a valuable early-season pollen source for bees and swallowtail butterflies as well as a nectar source for hummingbirds. This phlox is suitable for shade gardens, woodland gardens, cottage gardens, rain gardens, low-maintenance gardens, and perennial borders and is also an excellent groundcover. Garden writer Ketzell Levine aptly notes that "the species *Phlox divaricata*'s strength is not as a specimen but as a mingler, chatting its way across the woodland floor."



### The GCA Montine M. Freeman Scholarship in Native Plant Studies:

Established in 2017 to encourage research in, understanding, development, and use of underutilized native plants.  
To learn more [click here](#).

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## *GCA Plant of the Year Winners with USDA growing zones*

### *Grasses*



*Muhlenbergia capillaris* (muhly grass, pink muhly grass); Zones 6-10

### *Perennials*



*Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed); Zones 5-9



*Geum triflorum* (Prairie smoke); Zones 3-7



*Baptisia* x 'Purple Smoke' (false indigo 'Purple Smoke'); Zones 3-9



*Pycnanthemum muticum* (mountain mint); Zones 4-8



*Spigelia marilandica* (Indian pink); Zones 5-9



*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* 'Raydon's Favorite' (aromatic aster 'Raydon's Favorite'); Zones 3-9



*Phlox divaricata* 'Blue Moon' (woodland phlox); Zones 3-8

### *Shrubs*



*Carpenteria californica* 'Elizabeth' (California bush anemone); Zones 8-9



*Garrya elliptica* 'James Roof' (coast silk-tassel); Zones 8-9



*Rhododendron prunifolium* (plumleaf azalea); Zones 5-8



*Viburnum nudum* 'Winterthur' (possumhaw, smooth witherod); Zones 5-9



*Aesculus parviflora* (bottlebrush buckeye); Zones 4-8



*Cephalanthus Occidentals* (button bush); Zones 5-9

### *Trees*



*Abies concolor* (white fir); Zones 4-7



*Acer pensylvanicum* (striped maple); Zones 3-7



*Betula nigra* 'Little King' FOX VALLEY™ (river birch 'Little King'); Zones 3b-9



*Cercis canadensis* (Eastern redbud); Zones 4-9



*Cotinus obovatus* (American smokebush); Zones 4-8



*Magnolia ashei* (ashe magnolia); Zones 6-9



*Magnolia virginiana* (sweetbay magnolia); Zones 5-9



*Quercus macrocarpa* (bur oak); Zones 4-8



*Taxodium distichum* (bald cypress); Zones 4-11



*Thuja plicata* (giant (Western) arborvitae); Zones (4) 5-7(9)



*Ulmus americana* 'Princeton' (American elm 'Princeton'); Zones 3-9



*Cladrastis kentukea* - syn. *C. lutea* (Kentucky yellowwood); Zones 4-8 (9)

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### *Vines*



*Wisteria frutescens* (American wisteria); Zones 5-9



*Aristolochia macrophylla* (Dutchman's Pipe) ; Zones 4-8

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