

Featured Perennial

Geranium species & cultivars – Perennial Geranium, Cranesbill

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Photo Credit: © Keith A Williamson

Clockwise from top left: *G. platypetalum*, *G. cinereum* 'Ballerina', *G. sanguineum*,
G. himalayense 'Plenum', *G. 'Rozanne'*, *G. dalmaticum*

Botanic name: *Geranium* species & cultivars

Common name: Perennial Geranium, Cranesbill

Height: 4 inches to 3 feet

Spread: 12 inches to 3 feet

Light: Adaptable, from sun to shade

Water: Low to average

Soil: Adaptable, from clay loam to porous, rocky soils

Growth habit: Spreading groundcover to large mounding

How to use: Used as groundcovers, rock garden plants, and in perennial borders

Perennial geraniums, unlike their annual cousins, grow and thrive in temperate regions that routinely see freezing winter temperatures. Also known as cranesbills for the resemblance of the seed heads to the head and bill of a crane, they possess many virtues that make them ideal for the landscape, including a range of flower colors, sizes, fall foliage colors, fragrances, and adaptability to a variety of growing conditions. Some cranesbills, such as *Geranium cinereum* 'Ballerina' create tidy, 6-8" tall mounds of rounded, lobed leaves. Attractive, pale pink flowers with striking, reddish purple veins bloom on slender stalks above the foliage. Tuck this plant into rock gardens and small spaces!



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Other, robust geraniums, range 12-24", and some up to 3' tall. The leaves may be moderately to deeply lobed, with pointed to rounded edges, with blossoms ranging from white, to pink, rose, lavender, purple and blue.

Examples include *Geranium sanguineum* (magenta), *G. endressii* 'Wargrave Pink', *G. 'Johnson's Blue'*, and *G. viscosissimum*, a Colorado native with rose-purple blossoms. These larger cranesbills work well in the perennial border, especially where they provide color and presence after spring bulbs and perennials such as bearded iris have faded.

Geranium cantabrigiense, Cambridge Cranesbill, a groundcover type of cranesbill, grows in the 6" range, with thick, highly fragrant foliage that turns wine-red in the fall. Its pink blossoms (white for the cultivar 'Biokovo') create a striking carpet of color in late spring to mid-summer in sun, or under the shade of trees and evergreens.

Versatility allows perennial geraniums to fill many niches in the landscape. With easily a dozen or more types to choose from, cranesbills should be high on any gardener's list!



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