**Wild geranium (Geranium maculatum)**

**Family: Geranium (Geraniaceae)**

**DESCRIPTION:** A showy, herbaceous woodland perennial, wild geranium — AKA spotted geranium, alumroot or cranesbill — graces forest edges and openings with its rose-pink to purple blooms from mid-April to mid-June. It grows 1 to 3 feet tall, thriving in partial sun to deep shade.

**USES:** Wild geranium propagates easily but is not aggressive or invasive, making it ideal for home landscapes. Native bumblebees, solitary bees and syrphid flies seek its pollen and nectar. It’s a larval host for leaf-mining and white-marked tussock moths. Historically, wild geranium was used to relieve mouth and throat sores, and as a laxative and antiseptic.

**PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

This versatile, winter-hardy native thrives in Minnesota as far north as Zone 3, tolerates a wide range of soil and moisture conditions, and requires little attention. Its bright and cheerful flowers produce a mass of colorful blooms. Wild geranium can be planted as woodland groundcover, under a single shade tree, as a formal garden border, or in a shady corner. Plantings are most often started with containerized plants, but seed can be spread on the surface of the soil in mid to late fall. Root clumps are easily divided and transplanted in spring or fall. For a spectacular naturalized garden with a riot of spring color persisting well into summer, consider companion plants including woodland phlox, Eastern red columbine, golden Alexenders, blue phlox and ferns. Do not apply fertilizer. An inch or two of home compost or leaf litter applied after a hard freeze is sufficient. Bright red fall foliage adds color and texture after seed pods emerge. The pods resemble a tiny crane’s bill; hence wild geranium is also called “cranesbill.”

**REFERENCES:**

- Minnesota Wildflowers
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- University of Wisconsin Extension
- USDA NRCS Plants Database
- Cornell Botanic Gardens

**Developed by Bonny Siegfors, Itasca County Volunteer Extension Master Gardener**

Siegford, whose pollinator gardens feature 70-plus native species, provides plants and guidance to others growing pollinator gardens in her community.