

Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

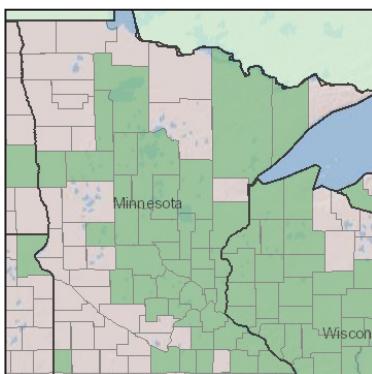
Family: Geranium (*Geraniaceae*)

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.

REFERENCES:

- [Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
- [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)
- [University of Wisconsin Extension](#)
- [USDA NRCS Plants Database](#)
- [Cornell Botanic Gardens](#)



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: BWSR

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FACU

ID: Blooms form loose clusters of five rounded petals. The 1- to 1.5-inch flowers have striated pollen guides that attract pollinators. Coarsely toothed, 6-inch gray-green palmate leaves have three to five lobes. Fine hairs cover upper and lower leaf surfaces.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Bicknell's cranesbill (*G. bicknellii*) and Carolina geranium (*G. carolinianum*) have paler (white to pinkish-lavender), smaller, less showy flowers up to one-third inch across, with oblong or egg-shaped petals slightly notched at the tip.

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 Alexanders, 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."

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

