

A Geraniaceae for Every Garden
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Long-time favorites of American gardeners, geraniums offer flowers in eye-catching colors, upright or trailing stems, scented or textured leaves, and annual or perennial varieties; there is a Geraniaceae for every garden.

Pelargonium -- Plants most often thought as geraniums are pelargoniums and divided into several major types. Zonal geraniums (*Pelargonium x hortorum*) are upright plants with rounded leaves featuring colored bands/zones and flower clusters that sit on long stalks. Ivy leaf geraniums (*Pelargonium peltatum*) have thick, semi-succulent ivy shaped leaves and trailing stems with flowers. Scented geraniums are prized for their fragrant leaves rather than their small flowers. Leaves may be textured with lacy, rounded, or saw-toothed edges, and have the scent of rose, apple, mint, lemon and more. Regal/Martha Washington geraniums (*Pelargonium x domesticum*) have the largest flowers, usually bi-colored with a dark center that fades into a second color and may be heavily veined or patterned. They prefer cooler climates with nights below 60 degrees and have a shorter bloom period in hot weather.

Care of Pelargonium -- Pelargonium need up to six hours of direct sun daily and prefer afternoon shade in hot weather. Use a balanced fertilizer every two weeks and water early in the day, allowing soil to dry before rewatering. Avoid overhead watering to prevent disease. Deadhead regularly to encourage repeat flowering, pinch stems to encourage compact growth, and remove dead/discolored leaves. Cut back on watering as the weather cools and move these frost tender plants indoors or to a sheltered outdoor location for the winter. Some varieties are susceptible to caterpillar damage. Look for irregular shaped holes or misshapen leaves and small black dots (feces) left by red to green to brown caterpillars. Control methods include hand picking. Be sure to check leaf undersides and look for caterpillars folded in leaf sections or shelters rolled in silk. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) spray, which is environmentally friendly, can be applied according to label directions to both sides of the leaves as eggs are hatching.

True/Hardy Geraniums -- These plants are also known as perennial geraniums or cranesbills because the seed pod resembles a crane's bill. Most are low growing and spread by rhizomes, with foliage that is frequently divided and lacy looking. These plants are relatively pest free, deer resistant, and generally drought tolerant once established. They also take cold weather as low as 20-25 degrees F.

Erodium -- These perennials, known as Stork's or Heron's Bill, are generally small and compact, often used in rock gardens, as border plants, and in containers. They flower over an extended period from spring to fall; some close their flowers in the early afternoon and reopen them later in the day. They are tough plants that are cold hardy and drought tolerant once established. They like well-drained soil and can suffer from crown rot during wet winter months. Erodium prefer morning sun and afternoon shade in hot inland areas and are comparatively pest free.

No matter which plants you decide to try, inviting a geranium into your garden can mean many seasons of garden beauty.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698, and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/.

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open weekly on Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. –noon, March through October. We do close in case of rain, please check our website for details https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news.