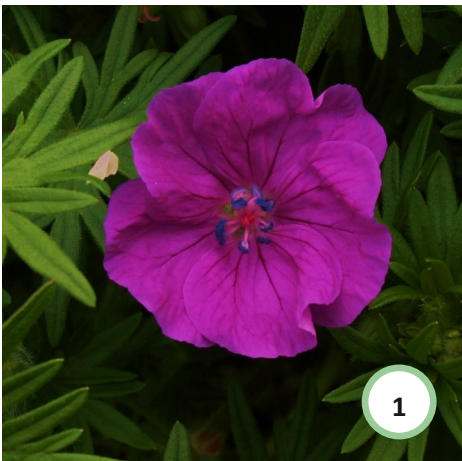


Going Native

There are several Hardy Geraniums that are native to the U.K. including both annuals and perennials though not all are suitable for garden cultivation.

Some such as *Geranium robertianum* and *Geranium lucidum* look charming in the wild but seed so prolifically they seem intent on world domination, (yes, I know some of the cultivated geraniums produce lots of offspring, but these usually have more attractive flowers or foliage). If you have acres of wild garden then by all means give them a go if you wish, but I wouldn't advise including them in a neat and tidy plot.

Now on to the good stuff.

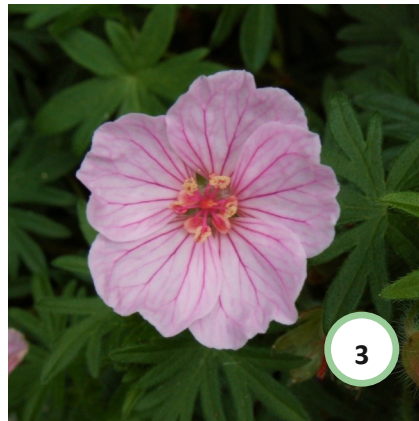


***Geranium sanguineum* (1)**, known as The Bloody Cranesbill, is my favourite native, growing to around 30cm/12ins. with magenta pink flowers from early summer to autumn, and preferring full sun, though it will cope with light shade. It has been suggested the common name derives from the stem, root or autumn leaf colour, take your pick! Though if my blood was the same colour as the roots, an orangey shade, I'd be off to the doctors rather quickly.

I still grow the species as well as some of the many cultivars available. They have different heights and spreads but never become a nuisance, only producing a very few



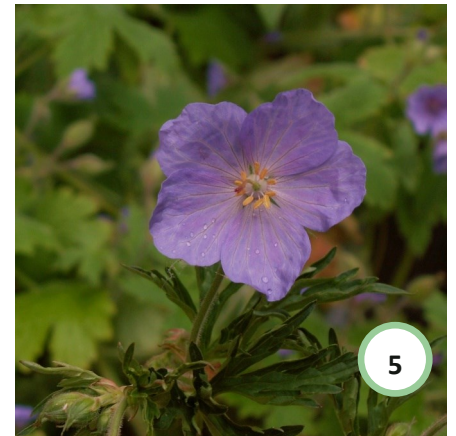
seedlings in my garden. Apart from '**Album**' (2) which is a larger more open plant with, in my opinion, the best pure white blooms of any geranium, the others come in varying shades of pink. The variety **striatum** (3) has pale pink flowers with darker pink veining,



'**Elke**' (4) is darker pink with white petal margins and '**Max Frei**' a bright magenta on a neat, compact plant.



Linda Scott of
Linda Scott Hardy Plants



***Geranium pratense* (5)** is the tall, about 90cm/36ins. Meadow Cranesbill with large purple/blue flowers that in summer can be seen growing on verges along the side of the road.

The different cultivars come in shades of blue, pink and white, some with dark brown to almost black foliage, and also include several double forms. The doubles are not as large or vigorous and can be short lived, though they seem to be rejuvenated by lifting and dividing every three years or so.

***Geranium pratense* 'Striatum' (6)** is unusual in having white flowers with irregular, blue streaks and spots, each flower being different, some even completely blue or totally white all on the same plant. The Geranium known as 'Splish Splash' has the same flowers and as



far as I can tell is no different to 'Striatum'. There is a variation called 'Janet's Special' which has pink as opposed to blue markings, but I have not seen it growing, just photographs

An old favourite is 'Mrs. Kendal Clark' with very pale violet flowers with white veins, not new but still a good garden plant.

Geranium pratense grows best in full sun but as with many geraniums is adaptable and will take light shade, though there won't be as many flowers. It doesn't like to dry out and can be susceptible to mildew if not kept moist in summer.

A good shade plant is Geranium sylvaticum the native Wood

Cranesbill. It grows to about 60cm and comes in various shades of violet, pink and white. As the name suggests it is excellent grown under



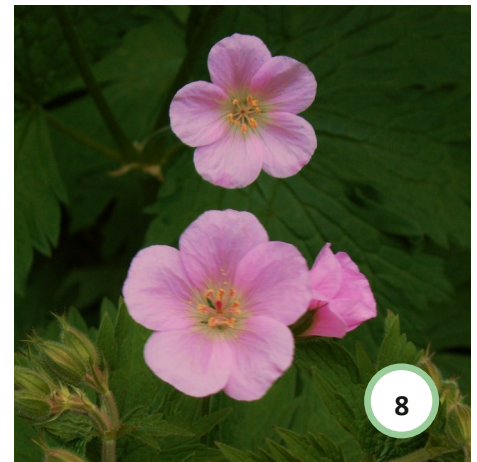
trees, though not in very dry areas, and has a flush of flowers in late spring.

Geranium sylvaticum 'Album' (7) has pure white flowers and just shines out in the shade. Unlike many of the other colours which need to be divided it also comes true from seed.

Other favourites of mine are 'Baker's Pink' (8) which has clear pink flowers and 'Melinda' (9) with larger flowers of pale pink with darker pink veins.

These three are, I think, the best of

the native Geraniums. I have mentioned only a few of the dozens of varieties, forms and cultivars available which are fun to seek out and make wonderful easy to grow garden plants.



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