

Geranium maculatum

AMERICAN CRANESBILL is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has pale to rose-purple flowers.

It is also known as Alum bloom, Alum root, American cranesbill root, American kino root, American tormentil, Astringent root, Chocolate flower, Common cranesbill, Cranesbill, Cranesbill geranium, Crowfoot, Crowfoot geranium, Dove's-foot, Fluxweed, Geranium, Hemlock, *Kurjenpolvi* (Finnish), Old maid's nightcap, Rock weed, Sailor's knot, Shameface, Spotted cranebill, Spotted cranesbill, Spotted geranium, Storksbill, Tormentil, Wild cranesbill, Wild geranium, and Wood geranium.

Maculatum is derived from Latin *macula* (spot, stain) meaning 'spotted or blotched'.

There were quite a few North American Indian tribes who recognized American cranesbill as a source of medicine. The Chippewa, Iroquois, Meskwaki and Menominee tribes all used it to treat diarrhoea, and the Iroquois also used it for some heart disorders and prescribed it as a laxative and to cause vomiting. It seems to have been especially valued by the Chippewa and Cherokee Indians for treating any oral problems suffered by children, and the Iroquois and Meskwaki tribes used it similarly for adults as well. The root could be an ingredient in treatment for venereal diseases in the Iroquois and Choctaw tribes, and the Meskwaki Indians used it for piles and burns and to ease toothache. The plant was applied to sores by the Cherokee and Iroquois tribes, it was used too to stem bleeding by the Cherokee, and was turned to by the Choctaw, Iroquois and Cherokee Indians for treating wounds as well.

Although for a period American cranesbill was included in the United States Pharmacopoeia the root is only used in folk medicine now. It used to be recommended for the treatment of cholera, some venereal diseases and dysentery. In powdered form it was applied externally to wounds to stop them bleeding. Today an infusion or decoction can still be used as a gargle for sore throats, and can be taken for treating diarrhoea, internal or external bleeding and ulcers. It can also be used in remedies for piles.