

# Cranesbill Root and Powder Profile

## Also known as

Geranium maculatum, Geranium robertianum, Wild Geranium, Alum Root, American Cranesbill, Spotted Cranesbill, Old Maid's Nightcap, and Crowfoot.

## Introduction

Cranesbill is a 2 foot high bush with erect, unbranched stems with "toothed" leaves and pinkish-purple flowers that grows in temperate woodlands across North America. Cranesbill is an unusually rich source of tannins. It is so rich in tannins that it is a traditional astringent for bleeding, and an essential tool of Russian herbal medicine for treating diarrhea. Dr. Samuel Waggaman wrote in his 1895 Compendium of Botanic Materia that cranesbill's main virtues lie in its powerful astringent qualities, and it is highly recommended for diarrhea and dysentery.

## Constituents

Tannins, which oxidize to give the tea a red color, also gums, resins, starch, anthocyanidins, and calcium oxalate.

## Parts Used

Leaves (of herb Robert) or roots (of Geranium maculatum).

## Typical Preparations

Tea, tincture, and poultice.

## Summary

Cranesbill is used for its tannins, compounds that cause proteins in mucous membranes and other linings of the human body exposed directly to the tea to cross-link to prevent leakage or infection. Its primary use in modern herbal medicine is to treat diarrhea in children without side effects. It is also used in poultices to treat pain from infection or inflammation and to relieve the discomfort of cyclic breast pain. The "tanning" action of cranesbill makes it useful for treating conditions as varied as sore throat, canker sores, ulcers, burns, gingivitis, leukorrhea, hemorrhoids,

## Precautions

None reported

**Botanical: Geranium maculatum (LINN.)**

**Family: N.O. Geraniaceae**

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---**Synonyms**---Alum Root. Spotted Cranesbill. Wild Cranesbill. Storksbill. Alum Bloom. Wild Geranium. Chocolate Flower. Crowfoot. Dove's-foot. Old Maid's Nightcap. Shameface.

---**Parts Used**---Dried rhizome, leaves.

---**Habitat**---Flourishes in low grounds and woods from Newfoundland to Manitoba, south to Georgia, Missouri and in Europe.

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---**Description**---A perennial, grows from 1 to 2 feet high. The entire plant is erect and unbranched, more or less covered with hairs; the leaves deeply parted, each division again cleft and toothed, flowering April to June, colour pale to rosy purple, petals veined and woolly at base, fruit a beaked capsule, divided into five cells, each cell containing one seed, the root stocks 2 to 4 inches long thick with numerous branches for the next growth, outside brown, white and fleshy inside when fresh, when dried it turns to a darkish purple inside; no odour, taste strongly astringent, contains much tannin which is most active just before the plant flowers. This is the time the root should be collected for drying.

---**Constituents**---Tannic and gallic acid, also starch, sugar, gum, pectin and colouring matter.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Styptic, astringent, tonic. Used for piles and internal bleeding. Excellent as an injection for flooding and leucorrhoea, and taken internally for diarrhoea, children's cholera, chronic dysentery; a good gargle.

The leaves are also used and give the greatest percentage of tannin and should be collected before the plant seeds.

---**Dosages**---15 to 30 grains. Infusion, 1 OZ. herb to 1 pint water. Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm. Geranin, 1 to 3 grains.

---**Other Species**---

The English herb *Geranium dissectum* has similar properties.