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Hints on Growing Geraniums – Care of House and Garden Plants

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

Home and Family Series

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Care of House and Garden Plants

Hints on Growing GERANIUMS

Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University



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The geranium is one of the most popular plants for spring flower beds and flower profusely during the entire growing season.

Soil

A good garden loam soil is best. If the soil is to be used for planters or window boxes, use 3 parts soil, 1 part sand, 1 part peat.

If garden soil is clayish, mix some peat moss to loosen the soil. If garden soil is very sandy, add peat moss to help retain nutrients and water.

Fertilizer

Monthly application of 10-10-10 at the rate of 5 pounds per 100 square feet. For potted plants, use a 20-20-20, 2 tablespoons per gallon of water. Where shopping, ask for these formulations — 10-10-10, 20-20-20.

Planting

Plant after danger of frost is over (will vary according to location). Plant rooted cuttings or potted geranium in soil so that level of soil of plant is equal to level of surrounding soil.

Water plants in thoroughly (do not allow plants to wilt).

Plant where there is an abundance of sunlight.

Remember good plants = plenty of sun + enough water + adequate fertilizer.

Varieties

There are a number of varieties available at your florist or greenhouse. Ask their advice in picking a variety suitable for your location.

The following geraniums are popular in the Eastern United States:

Red. — Improved Richard, Olympia Red, Bonfire, Monmouth Red, Radio Red, Pride of Camden, Red Fiat, Red Irene, Dark Red Irene, Better Times, Victory, Red Hildegard.

Pink. — Improved Picardy, Salmon Supreme, Pink Cloud, Salmon Ideal, Enchantress Fiat, Gail, Irvington Beauty, Salmon Irene.

White. — Springfield White, Layton's White, Mme. Buchner, Madonna, Snowball.

Holding Over Winter

Take plants up before first frost, place in pots, store in cool place, decrease amount of moisture, use low light intensity. The goal is to keep the plant alive, but not in an active growing state.

Pests

Greenhouse Whitefly — Adult whiteflies, winged, wedge-shaped insects 1/16 inch long, and wingless immature nymphs frequent the underside of new tender leaves. When disturbed, the adults fly in all directions. They suck large amounts of sap

from the leaves, causing them to become pale, stippled, and then drop. Honeydew secreted by the whiteflies accumulates on the leaves and turns black with sooty mold adding to the disfigurement of the plant.

Control. — Spray or dip plants, making sure to obtain coverage of lower leaf surfaces, with either:

100 Gal.	1 Gal.
of Water	of Water
57% Malathion emul- sion, or	1½ pts. 1½ tsp.
25% DDT emulsion, or	3 pts. 1 tbsp.

Dust plants paying particular attention to covering lower leaf surfaces with either 5% DDT dust, 2% Lindane dust or 5% Malathion dust.

Mealy Bugs. — Soft bodied insects, about ¼ inch long covered with white waxy filaments; stunt plants by sucking juices from the stems of tender growth.

Control. — Spray plants with:

100 Gal.	1 Gal.
of Water	of Water
57% Malathion emul- sion, or	1½ pts. 1½ tsp.
25% Lindane emulsion	1½ pts. 1½ tsp.

Repeat in 10 to 14 days if necessary. Or dip plants in a solution containing 1 ounce of one of the following insecticides in 1 gallon of lukewarm water. Repeat in 10 to 14 days if necessary.

57% Malathion emulsion, or
20% Lindane emulsion
After dipping, lay plants on their side to drain.

Red Spider Mites. — Not insects, but red or greenish red creatures about 1/50 inch long, that are closely allied to spiders. They feed by piercing tissues and sucking up the liberated plant juices, thus reducing the vigor of the plant. Infested foliage becomes stippled, yellow and then dies; infested flowers are discolored and pale. Mites can be detected by forcibly jarring a portion of the foliage over a white piece of paper; mites will appear as tiny moving specks.

Control. — Spray plants with either:

	100 Cal.	1 Gal.
	of Water	of Water
18.5% Kelthane emul-	1 pt.	1 tsp.
sion, or		
25% Aramite emul-	1 pt.	1 tsp.
sion, or		

57% Malathion emul-
sion 1½ pts. 1½ tsp.

A second spray in 7-10 days may be necessary.

Diseases

Botrytis Blight. — This disease appears on blossoms as a fading and drying of the petals. The center florets are the first affected. If petals fall on leaves, spots yellowish in color will appear. Then when leaves are wet, these spots enlarge and become brown and water soaked.

Control. — Remove and destroy infected plant parts; keep all flowers picked once they start to lose petals. Pick up all fallen

petals. Use Zineb or Captan (according to label).

Virus Diseases

Crinkling of leaves, or spotting of foliage.

Control. — No spray, dust, or other chemical has been successful in killing the virus. Best control for all virus diseases is to discard and burn infected plants to prevent spread to healthy plants.

For further information on insects or disease control, contact the Department of Entomology or Botany and Plant Pathology at Michigan State University, East Lansing.