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Contributed by Trish Reynolds

## WHEN IS A GERANIUM NOT A GERANIUM

Recently I read an article in the *New York Times* where the author, Sophie Bew, quoted a statement made by Steve Gamble, a noted English plantsman, that “The amateur gardener could be forgiven for using the term *Geranium* incorrectly” .....continuing he said “The plant commonly known as a *Geranium* is actually a *Pelargonium*, a different species.”

So how do we unwrap this commonly known “mistake”? Maybe a bit about the two different species will help.



Red Pelargonium in Clay Pot

The *Pelargoniums* are for us in Zone 7a, a popular annual bedding plant providing a burst of color or fragrance throughout the summer .....pink, red, purple, salmon and white. Easy to grow, requiring full sun with a long season of bloom from May to October, and thrive in terra cotta pots as well as in our garden. They work well on their own for a bold statement of color or combined with other plants such as lavender or nemesia. Some types, such as the Ivy variety are perfect for growing in hanging baskets.



Pelargonium Rozanne



Pink Pelargonium

As well as offering beautiful blooms, some known as the scented leaf variety have fragrant leaves – apple, lemon, orange, spice, citronella, lavender, and more. This variety is not generally known for its blooms but rather for its scent and is often sold as an herb, and the leaves are said to be edible.

Now the “true” Geranium, also known as Cranesbill, is a hardy perennial, bursting with flowers in the spring and sporadically during the summer. With a simple shearing after the first bloom, the plants will wow you with a flush of new growth and flowers. The Geranium is also known for its lush foliage which adds valuable texture to your garden throughout the season. These marvelous plants are tough, pest and disease resistant, and require very little care. They are easy to grow, requiring moderately fertile, well drained soil. A few varieties are drought tolerant in normal summer conditions.

Now the “true” Geranium, also known as Cranesbill, is a hardy



Geranium Ann Folkard

There is a hardy geranium to suit most garden situations. Some do incredibly well in sunny borders while others prefer woodland settings. Some make a fabulous weed-choking ground cover while others are well suited to containers or rock gardens. As I said, most bloom profusely over a very long season, extending from spring to late fall (if cut back hard after the first flush of blooms starts to fade in early summer).



Geranium Rozanne

Hope this helps clear up “When is a Geranium Not a Geranium!”