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# Geranium Culture

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Most people, when speaking of a geranium, are thinking of the common geranium grown inside and outside as a very popular blooming plant. Geraniums are, of course, one of the larger group classed by botanists as pelargoniums. There are in this large class the Lady Washington pelargonium or Martha Washington geranium, Ivy geraniums, Peppermint geraniums, Lemon geraniums, Nutmeg geraniums, Oakleaf geraniums, and Rose geraniums. These all have their differences in foliage, flower, or uses but when it comes to culture, they are much alike.

### Inside culture

Geraniums, when grown inside during the winter, prefer full light and a temperature of 55 to 60 degrees F. at night and 70 to 75 degrees F. during the day. They should have good ventilation and the soil should be kept a little on the dry side most of the time. Geraniums do their best while young or during the first year from cuttings. Plants over a year old are not very satisfactory even for outside culture. They are usually discarded in the fall after cuttings are taken for the new plants. They can, however, be kept over winter by taking them up carefully and storing them in a cool, moderately dry place. Individual plants can be cut back heavily and potted up or several plants can be healed in in a box of soil, sand, or peat moss. A very light occasional watering will prevent drying out.

### Soil

For bed culture, a friable soil, well worked but not very rich, is preferred. In potting geraniums, use a mixture of three parts garden loam, one part leaf mold or peat moss, and one part coarse sand. If the soil is of a heavy clay type, use only two parts of soil and add another part of sand to the mixture.

### Fertilizer and water

The geranium is one plant where fertility and water must be held to a minimum. Otherwise, it will produce foliage and few flowers.

Geraniums raised in pots require constant grooming to maintain form. This means removal of faded flowers, pinching back of extra long tender shoots, and using very light fertilization when needed.

### Propagation

Late summer and fall is the time when most geranium cuttings are taken. September and October cuttings make fine plants for early spring blooming or for bedding outside. The best wood for cuttings comes from plants that have been kept rather dry for several weeks. The growth will then be firm rather than succulent.

Cuttings may be started in several ways. The commercial grower usually roots them in a bed of coarse, clean sand. The home gardener may put each cutting in a pot of sandy soil. Cuttings should be from two to four inches in length. Half of the larger leaves should be removed. In setting the cutting, press the soil firmly around the base and then water thoroughly. During the next two or three weeks, while roots are forming, the cuttings should be lightly shaded if the weather is warm. After the roots have started, give the cuttings full sunlight, watering just enough to prevent shriveling of the stems.

### Winter flowering

If winter flowering is desired, propagation should be done in August. A fertile garden loam without any added fertilizer is good as a potting soil. As the plants grow and become pot-bound, they are shifted to the next larger sized container. The soil should be well firmed each time, as this

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favors the production of a short, stocky growth and the formation of flower buds. When plants are four to five inches tall, the tips are cut out to induce branching.

Flowering will usually begin four to five months after the cuttings are started if growth is at a moderate rate. Watering is done only when the soil becomes quite dry and then in very moderate amounts. Water on the foliage or in large amounts will cause spotting of the leaves.

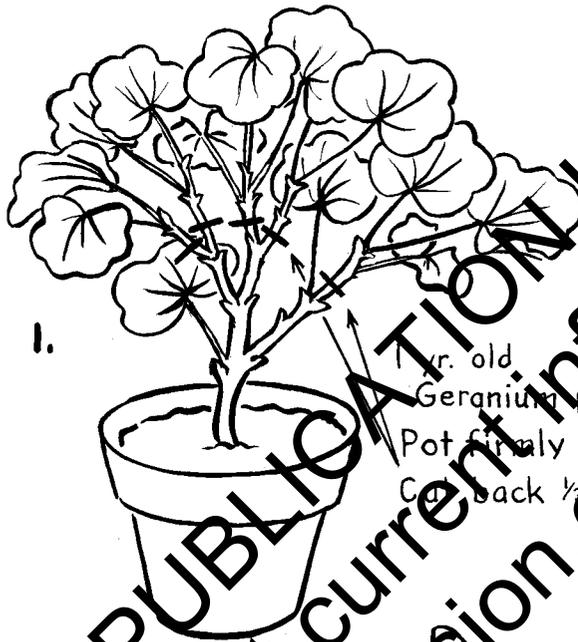
Containers that run four to six inches in diameter serve best for the blooming plant. Regular blooming takes place best when the roots are pot-

bound, the fertility moderate, and the soil moisture quite low.

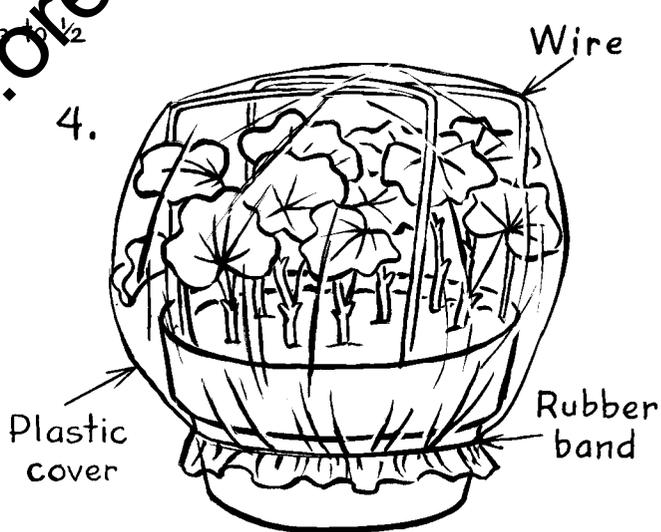
#### Diseases

There are several fungus and virus diseases of geraniums, all of which are of interest to the large plant propagator. Some are controlled by use of sprays and dips and others have no control but the introduction of new disease-free stock.

The home flower grower and small propagator can best handle diseases by control of insects which might spread the problem and by careful selection of plants. Never keep any plant around that is not in good health and growing properly.



2. Cutting  
Make 3"-4"  
cuttings



Cuttings placed in pot of sand or perlite  
Wires support plastic cover to hold moisture

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