

Geranium pratense



Family: Geraniaceae

Local/common names:
Meadow Cranesbill, Palto
(Ladakh)

Trade name: Geranium oil

Profile:

Geranium pratense, a high altitude member of the family Geraniaceae and grows in meadows and roadsides ranging from Europe to the Himalayas in north Asia. It is a native of Europe. The plant has saucer-shaped flowers in shades of white, blue or violet in early to mid-summer. The roots of the plant have medicinal properties and used as a vulnerary. The plant is also used in the perfume industry.

Habitat and ecology: The plant is found on open slopes and occupies moist places and stony wet slopes adjoining river streams and rivulets. It occurs from Western Europe to Western China. The Central European *G. pratense* is confined to relatively warm areas and is absent in higher mountain regions. In India, the species is available in Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir), Lahaul and Spiti, Pangi, Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh), Joshimath (Uttarakhand), Sikkim and Tawang (Arunchal Pradesh).

Morphology: It is a perennial garden herb. The leaves are divided into five or seven lobes, which are also lobed and toothed. The stem leaves are paired and gradually decrease in size towards the top, while the stalks become shorter. The flowers are up to 4.5 cm in diameter, blue to bluish-purple in colour and mounted on flower stalks. The immature fruit and its stalk are reflexed.

Distinguishing features: The inflorescence bears glandular hairs and the characteristically large, blue to bluish-purple flowers are positioned in a more or less horizontal direction with respect to the stem.

Life cycle: Flowering occurs in June-July and fruiting in August.

Uses: The roots are used as a vulnerary and are extensively used in Tibetan medicine. The roots have analgesic, anti-inflammatory and febrifuge properties and are used in the treatment of fevers from influenza, inflammation of the lungs, pain and swellings of the limbs. The flowers are also used in the perfume industry.

Market rate: Data not available