

Zonal Geranium

Known simply as "geraniums", those red, pink or white flowering plants with thick pleated leaves that look so good in pots and window boxes. They are one of the most popular container plants, yet they are not really geraniums at all. Botanically they are *Pelargonium*. Zonal geraniums are bushy plants, mainly used for containers and bedding. Geraniums are available in a spectrum of colors including various pinks, reds, lavenders, bicolors, and white.

Hardiness Zones

USDA Hardiness Zones 9 -12 although they may over-winter in zones as cool as Zone 7, if they have some protection and the winter is mild. They are not frost tolerant. For winter you can bring them in and grow them as houseplants, in a bright, direct light window

Sun Exposure

Full sun to partial shade with best bloom performance in full sun.

Mature Plant Size

Size will vary with variety. There are some dwarf geraniums that will never get more than 5 - 6 inches tall and newer varieties being bred for height and spread. In general, most are between 5 - 24 inches H x 12 - 15 inches W.

Bloom Period

Zonal geraniums start blooming in mid-spring and will repeat bloom until frost. Deadheading after the flower fades will encourage more blooms.

Geranium Growing Tips

Soil: Zonal geraniums prefer a slightly acid soil of about 5.8 to 6.5

Caring for Geranium Plants

Zonal geraniums are not heavy feeders, but a light feeding with your favorite fertilizer, every 2 - 4 weeks, will keep them vigorous.

Stressing the plants slightly by watering only after the soil has been sitting completely dry for a day or two seems to encourage more profuse blooming. Just don't leave them dry for so long they start dropping leaves and declining.

Pests & Problems of Geraniums

For the most part, zonal geraniums are not prone insect infestation when grown outdoors. Indoors, aphids and whiteflies can become a nuisance.

There are a few fungal and bacterial diseases to look out for, mainly:

Stem or root rot caused by poorly drained soil.

Gray Mold/Botrytis, which causes grayish fuzz on the leaves and eventually a slimy mush, especially in humid or damp weather.