**Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum)* Geraniaceae**

**Botanical description:** Low growing (10-50 cm) annual herb. The leaves are deeply divided into 3-5 segments. The stems and the leaf margins turn red. Lower leaves may appear opposite or whorled but upper leaves are single. The stems and leaves have light hairs and are soft and juicy. The flowers have 5 pink petals, orange or purple anthers, and are borne in pairs. The seed heads are the characteristic cranesbill shape of the Geraniaceae. The plant is aromatic if crushed.

**Part used:** Leaves and flowering tops

**Harvesting, cultivation, and habitat**: Native to Ireland.Grows in walls, woods, rocky places (including near the sea), and in hedge banks. Will self seed freely. The leaves and flowering tops are harvested when available, most prolifically from May-August. The root may also be used. The plant can be dried, but it is better used fresh as it does not dry easily according to Cathy Skipper.

**History, folklore, taste/energetics:** It is generally agreed by those I have discussed this with that Herb Robert takes a bit of time to get to know, may even insist on a formal introduction. He (seems to have a masculine energy) is puckish. He teaches a lot about boundaries; knowing ourselves, coming into our own centre, and about relationships, the importance of sacred personal space in our relationships. The importance of keeping our own identity in relationship, maintaining separateness, stepping back and seeing the other person, rather than running forwards in neediness. The flowers describe this beautifully in the way that they are held in pairs, branching from the same stem, but with their own petiole. There is a balance, no expectations-true, deep, workable relating. It’s benefits in treating diabetes, balancing blood sugar levels and reducing sugar cravings (similar to Gymnema) show that it helps to balance the solar plexus. It works with the Earth Spleen/Stomach energy, reducing worry, balancing our relationship with Earth, the ability to digest and use nutrition on all levels-physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. It also helps those who have issues with intimacy (a solar plexus matter) and who substitute sugar and food for intimacy and relationship; those who crave sweet things when they feel a lack of tenderness.

It is a plant that helps us incarnate fully, properly, truly into the person we were born to be; a process that may take many years to accomplish. Some people regard it as a messenger or gateway plant (often the case in hedgerow plants), one that helps us access the messages of other plants. He helps us to let go of outcome desire, teaches us to release and step back into ourselves and our own space, thus allowing what is rightfully ours to flow towards us. He is confident in his relationship with the Earth and free of fear.

The redness of the stems and the way it can help with high blood pressure speak of how it helps us to circulate our heart energy through ourselves and out into the world. The pink flowers definitely indicate that it is a heart ally (most of this family are). The spear-like seed heads indicate that it is a heart warrior/heart protector plant; such plants help us to protect our heart by knowing who we are and being able to be open, confident in the knowledge of self and therefore the ability to discern what is us and what is other. The needle-like seed heads also speak of how it heals those small piercing wounds that sometimes happen when we are open and vulnerable.

Tastes bitter and aromatic, the taste varies on the age of the leaves and whether the plant is in flower. The taste is earthy; it has shallow roots.

‘I don’t need to be anchored with roots because I am the Earth’, Cathy Skipper’s observation, and thanks for Cathy for much of this information which has been confirmed by many others’ experience.

**Constituents:** tannins a bitter principle geraniin, citric acid and a volatile oil. The essential oil of Geranium robertianum L. was investigated by GC and GC-MS, which showed that linalol (22.9%) was its major component. γ-Terpinene (13.9%), germacrene-D (7.8%), limonene (5.3%), geraniol (4.4%), α-terpineol (3.8%) and phytol (3.8%) were the other major components of the oil, the composition of which has not been described to date. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ffj.2730070410/abstract

**Actions:** Astringent, haemostatic, styptic, weak diuretic

**Traditional and current uses:** Used to heal wounds externally. Also used to treat duodenal ulcers, mouth ulcers, and damage in the gastrointestinal tract, including fistulae. Used internally and as a douche to treat heavy menstrual bleeding (including if caused by fibroids or cervical carcinoma) and leucorrhoea ( a white discharge from the vagina). A strong infusion is applied topically to heal sores caused by Herpes viruses and to treat erysipelas (a strepotococcal skin infection). It has been used as a snuff for nosebleeds. It also helps to treat diabetes, high blood pressure and has a reputation for treating and preventing cancer.

UK herbalists often substitute *Geranium maculatum*, a slightly more astringent North American species, for our native ally.

Most of the Geraniaceae species growing here (*Geranium robertianum* and *Erodium* species, have a reputation for being haemostatic and are sometimes used as vegetables in Northern Africa. Some cause uterine contractions and therefore should perhaps be treated with caution in early pregnancy. Several species are also used as dye plants.