



## Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

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### Plant of the month: Soft Crane's-bill *Geranium potentilloides*



Soft Crane's-bill *Geranium potentilloides* is a sprawling perennial herb to 0.5 m high and spreading to 1.5 metres, sometimes rooting at the nodes, and with a thickened, branched taproot. The stems and upper surface of the leaves are covered with soft hairs. The round to kidney-shaped leaves to 4.5 cm long are divided into 5-7 lobes, which may be further divided or toothed. Solitary, small white to pink flowers occur on stems to 7 cm long, from December to February, followed by beaked fruit 12-15 mm long. The fruit opens out at maturity and divides into segments or mericarps (see photo) that contain the small brown seed. The variety found at Venus Bay and Cape Liptrap Coastal Park is *Geranium potentilloides* var. *potentilloides*. It is common in moist, sheltered sites and is found in the other south-eastern states, New Zealand and the Antarctic Islands.



Soft Crane's-bill likes a shady spot and is useful for soil stabilisation. The thickened tap root was eaten by the Aborigines. Propagation is from seed.



Geranium species belong in the Geraniaceae family. The genus name Geranium comes from the Greek *geranos*, crane, with the fruit resembling the head and beak of a crane and giving the plant its common name. Photo: Lorraine Norden.