

## Add Edible Flowers to Your Garden Plan

Various plant parts including the flowers have been used for centuries for making teas. Flower buds and petals also have been in soups, salads, or pickled. Plant seeds are what develops after the flower is finished which can be eaten raw or roasted such as sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds (pepita) and nuts. Once seeds are mature and dried for culinary purposes they can generally be used as whole or ground spices such as pepper, coriander, and mustard.

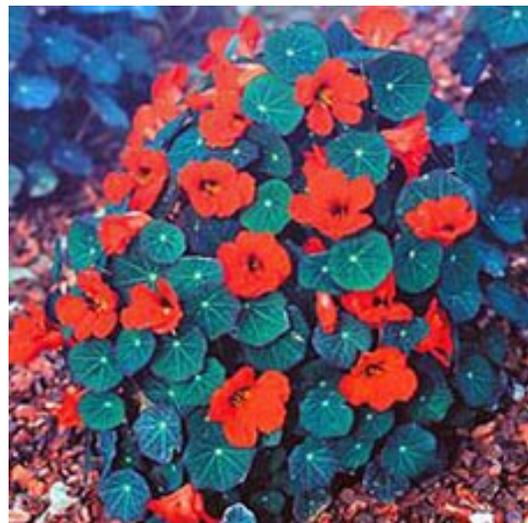


*Caper buds and berries, grown on mediterrainian flowering shrubs, are normally pickled.*

Many of the flowers we grow today were originally chosen for the garden based upon their attributes of aroma and flavour. The bonus is they also offer beauty, pollinator attraction, and pest management as companion plants.

Flowers can have a high nutritional value. Roses, especially rose hips, are very high in vitamin C. Marigolds and nasturtiums also contain vitamin C. Dandelion blossoms contain vitamins A and C. Like them or not, there is a good reason the non-native and invasive dandelion made its way to North America.

Of course, be sure to positively identify a flower before eating it. Some flowers have look-alikes that aren't edible. People with asthma, allergies, or hay fever should avoid eating flowers. To avoid pesticides only eat flowers that have been grown organically to be sure of no pesticide residue.



*The flowers, leaves, and stems of Nasturtium add a spicy taste to salads.*

## How to Gather Edible Flowers

- Collect flowers in the cooler parts of the day, preferably early morning after the dew has evaporated, or late afternoon. Sugars and volatile oils, the basis for aroma and flavor, are highest before heat and photosynthesis converts them into starch.
- Choose flowers that are at their peak, avoiding those that are not fully open or are starting to wilt.
- Place picked flowers in a shaded basket without crushing them.
- Cull blemished blossoms.
- Gently clean off any dirt or bugs and store clean blossoms in a hard container in the refrigerator to prevent crushing.

## Preparing Flowers for Eating

- Before using, gently wash the flowers and remove the stamens and styles (reproductive parts inside the flower). Flower pollen can detract from the flavor, and some people are allergic to it.
- With some flowers all parts are entirely edible such as violas, violets, scarlet runner beans, honeysuckle, and clover.
- Edible petals only include: roses, calendulas, tulips, chrysanthemums, yucca, and lavender. Pluck the petals of these flowers for use in salads and cooking.
- For most flowers the sepals, which are the parts below the petals, are not very tasty and should be removed before eating.
- Some flowers have a bitter white portion at the base of the petals where they attach to the flower that should be removed including: roses, dianthus, English daisies, signet marigolds, and chrysanthemums.

## Common Edible Annual Flowers

Single season flowers that are easy to grow as well as tasty:

- Calendula/pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) comes in yellow, gold, or orange flowers with a tangy, peppery taste.

- Garland chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum coronarium*) produces mild-favored, flowers in shades of yellow to white.
- African marigold (*Tagetes erecta*) has white, gold, yellow, or red flowers with a strongly pungent flavor.
- Signet marigold (*Tagetes tenuifolia*) features white, gold, yellow, or red flowers with a citrus flavor.
- Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*) has flowers in shades of white to red, with a watercress and peppery flavor.
- Pansy/viola (*Viola* spp.) has violet, white, pink, yellow, or multi-colored flowers with a sweet flavor.
- Petunia (*Petunia hybrida*) has a wide range of colors and a mild flavor.
- Garden salvia (*Salvia officinalis*) features blue, purple, white, or pink flowers with a slightly musky flavor.
- Pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*) has scarlet flowers with a sage flavor with pineapple undertones.
- Radish (*Raphanus sativus*) has yellow, spicy-hot flowers.
- Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum* spp.) has a wide range of colors with a bland to bitter flavor.
- Scented geranium (*Pelargonium* spp.) has white, red, pink, or purple flowers with flavors such as apple or lemon, depending on the variety.
- Scarlet runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*) have bright orange to scarlet flowers with a mild, raw bean flavor.
- Squash (*Cucurbita* spp.) has yellow to orange flowers with a mild, raw squash flavor.
- Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) features white, yellow, orange, or burgundy flowers. Unopened buds taste like a mild artichoke. Flower petals are bittersweet.
- Tuberous begonias (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*) have white, pink, yellow, red, orange or multi-colored flowers with a citrus flavor.



## Edible Perennial Flowers

- Baby's breath (*Gypsophila* sp.) has white or pink flowers with a mild, slightly sweet flavor.
- Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) features red, pink, white, or lavender flowers with a tea-like flavor that's stronger than the leaves.
- Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) have white, lavender, or purple flowers with a strong onion flavor.
- Dianthus/Pinks (*Dianthus*) have pink, white, and red flowers with a spicy, clove-like flavor.
- Daylily (*Hemerocallis* spp.) comes in a wide range of flower colors with a slight asparagus or summer squash-like taste.
- Borage (*Borago officinalis*) has blue, purple, and lavender flowers with a cucumber-like flavor.
- Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*) have yellow, slightly bitter flowers.
- Red clover (*Trifolium pretense*) has sweet-tasting, pink or red flowers.
- Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) come in a wide range of colors with a bland to slightly bitter flavor.
- Tulips (*Tulipa* spp.) come in a wide range of colors and have a mild, slightly sweet flavor.
- Violets (*Viola odorata*) have violet, pink, and white flowers with a sweet to slightly sour flavor.



## Tree and Shrub Edible Flowers

- Apple (*Malus* spp.) has white to pink flowers with a floral to slightly sour taste.
- Elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.) has sweet, white flowers.
- Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) has orange, red, or purplish red flowers with cranberry and citrus overtones.

- Linden (*Tilia* spp.) has white to yellow flowers with a honey-like flavor.
- Lilac (*Syringa* spp.) has fragrant white, pink, purple, or lilac flowers with a slightly bitter, lemony flavor.
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) features white, yellow, pink, or red flowers with a honey-like flavor.
- Plum (*Prunus* spp.) has pink to white flowers with a mild flavor, like flower nectar.
- Rose (*Rosa* spp.) has white, pink, yellow, red, or orange flowers with a highly perfumed, sweet to bitter flavor.

