

Edible Flowers

Edible flowers can add a unique flavor and lots of interesting color to foods. Experiment with their uses, but keep the following in mind:

1. Not all flowers are edible. Be sure you know what you are eating and eat flowers in moderation.
2. If a flower is on a plate, it should be edible. Don't garnish with non-edible flowers.
3. Eat only flowers that have been grown organically—those that you've grown or you know where they were grown. Never eat flowers that have been treated with pesticides.
4. Never eat flowers from florists, nurseries or garden centers (see #3).
5. If you have severe hay fever, asthma or allergies, eat flowers with caution.
6. Remove pistils and stamens from flowers before eating—eat only the petals.
7. There are many varieties of each flower species, which may have different tastes. Growing conditions will also affect taste.

Ten Top Edible Flowers:

Calendula (Pot Marigold) - *Calendula officinalis* - Slightly bitter flavor – bright orange – no fragrance. Can dry flowers for later. Used mostly for color, not much flavor. Annual

Chives – *Allium schoenoprasum* – use stems and flowers too!
Oniony. Harvest flowers when just open. Keep picking and will continue to flower until frost. Break petals up for use, because a whole flower will be overpowering!

Daylily – *Hemerocallis* – Each flower lasts only one day. Flavor kind of like green beans and eggplant. Darker colors are more bitter than pale yellows and oranges, which are sweeter. Buds can be frozen just like beans—blanch in boiling water, transfer to ice water, pat dry and freeze up to 8 months.

Mint – *Mentha spp.* Use leaves and flowers too! Different kinds like apple mint, curly mint, orange mint, peppermint. Will spread in garden, so might try containers and grow as annuals.

Nasturtium – *Tropaeolum majus* – spicy, peppery flavor. Annual. Can eat both brightly colored flowers and leaves. Leaves have a cresslike taste. Good addition to salads, pasta, meat dishes and sorbets.

Pansy – *Viola x Wittrockiana* – violet family. Pick when flowers just open—can be refrigerated a couple days, but best when fresh. Lots of different colors!

Rose – *Rosa spp.* – Perfumed flavor. Base of petals is whitish—white is bitter, so remove. Be sure free of pest controls!

Sage – *Salvia officianalis*. Mint family, use flowers and leaves. Drought tolerant; mixes well with perennial flowers.

Signet Marigold – *Tagetes signata* (dwarf marigold). Flavor best of any marigolds, like spicy tarragon. Remove bitter white part from base of petal. Can dry petals for later use.

Squash blossoms – *Curcubita pepo spp.* Most common variety is zucchini flower – good control for zucchini harvest! Large flowers are great for stuffing! Mild flavor.

Sources: Edible Flowers from Garden to Palate, by Cathy Wilkinson Barash. Fulcrum Publishing, Golden Colorado. (1993).

Flowers as Food, by Mary Lawrence & Djane Newdick. Salamander Books, London. (1991).