

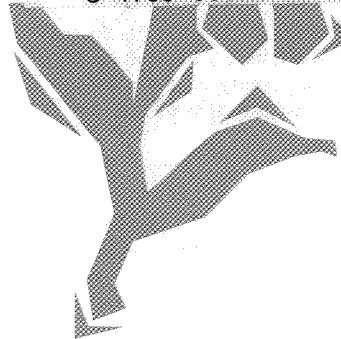
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# FLOWERS

Edible flowers

no. 7.237

by K.B. Badertscher and S.E. Newman<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Many flowers are edible and may be used in a variety of dishes to enhance the color, flavor and aroma. Flowers used as garnishes improve the appearance of many dishes and desserts. Edible flowers have been used in the culinary arts for flavor and garnish for hundreds of years. Early reports indicate that the Romans used flowers in cooking as they did in the Chinese and Middle Eastern cultures and in India. During Queen Victoria's reign in England, edible flowers were popular. Edible flowers are again popular in North America and Europe. Many flowers are edible; however, proper identification is essential because many flowers are poisonous and should not be consumed.

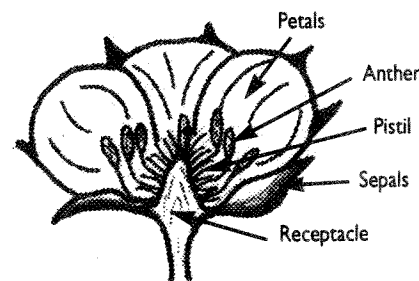


Figure 1. Flower parts.

Pick flowers early in the day and use flowers at their peak for the best flavor. Avoid unopened blossoms (except daylilies) and wilted or faded flowers. They may have a bitter or unappealing flavor. Do not consume flowers that have been sprayed with any pesticides, and generally avoid purchasing flowers from florists, garden centers or nurseries for consumption. These flowers are not grown for consumption. Table 1 lists several plants suitable for many dishes.

**Common garden plants with toxic flowers** (this list is not intended to be a complete guide): *Clematis* species – Clematis, Virgin's bower; *Colchicum* species – Crocus; *Daphne mezereum* – Daphne; *Digitalis purpurea*, foxglove, digitalis; *Hippeastum* species – Amaryllis; *Lobelia* species – cardinal flower; *Nicotiana* species – flowering tobacco; *Phoradendron* species – Mistletoe; *Rhododendron* species – azaleas, rhododendrons, rose bay; *Ricinus communis* – castor bean, African coffee tree; *Zantedeschia aethiopica* – Calla Lily; and *Zigadenus* species – death camas, alkali grass, wild onion.

To avoid stomach upset or to determine if there is an allergic reaction, introduce yourself slowly to new flowers, just as you would do with an infant and new food. Edible petals or entire flowers can be consumed; however, remove stems, anthers and pistils since they may be bitter (Figure 1). Use flowers that are free of insects and diseases. Many edible flowers are high in Vitamin C and/or Vitamin A along with other essential nutrients. Use edible flowers as garnishes and in salads. Recipes for flowers may be found in the following areas: baking, sauces, jelly, syrup, vinegars, honey, oil, tea, flower-scented sugars, candied flowers, wine and flavored liquors. Pick the flowers, rinse and place between damp paper towels. Refrigerate until ready to use. Some varieties may last longer if not washed until they are ready to use. Some flowers may be dried and used like dried herbs.

Fresh flowers also can be preserved for later use. Use flowers with larger petals, such as pansies, and paint the petals with an egg-white wash. Use a soft

## Quick Facts...

Proper identification of edible flowers is important.

Use petals for best flavor.

Use flowers that are grown without pesticides.

For best flavor, use flowers at their peak.

Introduce new flowers into the diet slowly to be able to pinpoint allergic reactions.

Edible flowers may also be preserved in oils or vinegars. For more information, consult Fact sheet 9.340 *Flavored vinegars and oils* available from "The Other Bookstore," Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Resource Center, 115 General Services Building, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-4061.

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Reference

Lampe, Kenneth F. AMA Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants, 1985. American Medical Association.

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brush and dehydrated egg whites to avoid any food poisoning. These flowers are edible if the dehydrated egg powder is pasteurized. After the petal is painted, dust the petal with super-fine granulated sugar and dry. Store the preserved flowers in an air-tight container in a cool, dark place. Avoid dark-colored petals; they turn dark.

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**Table 1. Recommended plants with edible flowers.**

Plant Name	Type <sup>1</sup>	Flower/Color	Bloom	Taste	Fragrance	Comments/Hints
<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i> Okra, Gumbo, Gombo	A	Yellow or red	Mid July to August	Mild, sweet and slightly mucilaginous	---	Full sun, hot weather; prefers clay to clay loam.
<i>Agastache foeniculum</i> Anise Hyssop	P	Lavender	July to frost	Strong anise, sweet, licorice	---	May die back to the ground; readily resows. Full sun to light shade; well-drained soil.
<i>Alcea rosea</i> Hollyhock	P	Various	July to frost	Little, slightly bitter	---	Best as a garnish or container for dip. Full sun to light shade.
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> Chive	P	Lavender, red to purple	May to June	Onion, strong	Onion	Forms clumps; separate florets to serve. Partial shade to full sun; also indoor plant.
<i>Allium tuberosum</i> Garlic chive	P	White	August to frost	Onion, strong	Onion	Separate florets to serve. Partial shade to full sun; also indoor plant.
<i>Anethum graveolens</i> Dill	A	Yellow	June to frost	Stronger than leaves	Dill	Resows readily, tolerates poor soil but prefers well-drained soils; full sun.
<i>Anthemis nobilis</i> English Chamomile	P	White petals; yellow center	Late June to frost	Sweet apple flavor	---	Ragweed sufferers may also be allergic to chamomile; drink no more than one cup per day of tea. Prefers moist, well-drained soil; full sun to partial shade.
<i>Anthriscus cerefolium</i> Chervil	A	White	May to June	Parsley-like hint of citrus, tarragon	---	Start in cold frame.
<i>Begonia X tuberhybrida</i> Tuberous Begonia	TP	White, pink, yellow, red, orange and combinations	July to August	Citrus	---	Grow indoors or outside; dig tubers each fall, just after frost and store; prefer moist, fertile soil; partial to full shade.
<i>Bellis perennis</i> English Daisy	P	White to purple petals	April to September	Mild to bitter	---	Use as garnish or in salads; thrives in cold weather, prefer full sun and moist soil.
<i>Borago officinalis</i> Borage	A	Blue, purple to lavender	June to July	Cucumber	---	Use as garnish; may be candied; full sun and light, poor, dry soil. Attracts bees.
<i>Brassica</i> spp. Broccoli, Cauliflower	B (grown as A)	Buds: blue-green; yellow flower, white buds in cauliflower	June to August	Broccoli	---	Vegetable; prefers full sun, grow in rich well-drained soil. Sow indoors six weeks prior to transplant.
<i>Brassica</i> sp. Mustard	A	Yellow	April to May	Mustard, hot	---	Salad garnish; watch for allergies.
<i>Calendula officinalis</i> Calendula, Pot Marigold	A	Yellow, gold/orange	June to August	Tangy and peppery	---	Dries well; ornamental; prefers cool weather, rich loam; direct sow.
<i>Carthamus tinctorius</i> Safflower, American Safflower, Saffron	A	Yellow to deep red	August	Bitter flavor	---	May impart yellow color into cooked foods. Full sun and light, dry, well-drained soil; start indoors and transplant.
<i>Cercis canadensis</i> Redbud	P	Pink	April	Beanlike to tart apple	---	Native tree to U.S. and may be marginal in Colorado; prefers full sun to partial shade and sandy loam; difficult to transplant.
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i> Garland Chrysanthemum, Shungiku	P	Yellow to white	August to October	Mild	---	Ornamental; full sun, rich, moist, well-drained soil.

Plant Name	Type <sup>1</sup>	Flower/Color	Bloom	Taste	Fragrance	Comments/Hints
<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i> , Oxeye Daisy	P	White/yellow center	April to August	Mild	---	Use as garnish or in salad; full sun, rich, moist, well-drained soil, invasive, see 7.233, Table 3.
<i>Cichorium intybus</i> Chicory	P	Blue to lavender	July to frost	Pleasant, mild-bitter similar to endive	---	Considered a weed; grows in almost any soil; sun to shade. invasive, see 7.233, Table 3.
<i>Citrus limon</i> Chicory	P	White	Varies with variety	Citrus, slightly bitter	Sweet floral	Subtropical tree but may be grown indoors.
<i>Citrus sinensis</i> Orange	P	White	Varies	Citrus, sweet/strong	Perfume, sweet	Subtropical tree but may be grown indoors.
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> Coriander	A	White	June to frost	Like leaf but milder	Fragrant	Herb, sow continuously for several harvests; sun, rich, well-drained soil.
<i>Cucurbita</i> sp. Squash or pumpkin	A	Orange, yellow	July to August	Vegetable; mild, raw squash	Slightly floral	Vegetable; enrich soil with compost; prefers full sun.
<i>Cynara scolymus</i> Artichoke	A	Immature head: green	Fall	Artichoke	---	Prefers rich soil and abundant moisture; propagate from division for annual harvest.
<i>Dendranthema X grandiflorum</i> Chrysanthemum	P	Red, yellow, pink orange, purple, white	August to October	Varieties differ, strong to bitter	Pungent	Ornamental; full sun, rich, moist, well-drained soil.
<i>Dianthus</i> sp. Dianthus or Pinks	P	Pink, white and red	June to August	Spicy, cloves	Some varieties are spicier	Ornamental; tolerates wide range of soils; full sun.
<i>Eruca vesicaria</i> Rocket, Arugula	A	White	May to frost	Nutty, smoky, less piquant than leaves	---	Salad green; sow continuously for harvest. Full sun to light shade, well-drained soil.
<i>Feijoa sellowiana</i> Pineapple Guava	P	White to deep pink	Grow indoors	Floral flavor; papaya or exotic melon	---	Grow indoors in a greenhouse; rich, well-drained soil; full sun to light shade.
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Fennel	P	Pale yellow	July to August	Licorice, milder than leaves, sweet	---	Tolerates wide range of soils, partial shade to full sun.
<i>Galium odoratum</i> Sweet Woodruff	P	White	May	Sweet, grassy, vanilla	Vanilla	Herb or ground cover; may be invasive; prefers shade.
<i>Gladiolus</i> sp. Gladiolus	TP	Various except true blue	6-8 weeks after planting	Mediocre	---	Best as a garnish or container for dips or spreads.
<i>Hemerocallis fulva</i> Daylily	P	Tawny orange	June to July	Cooked, combination of asparagus/zucchini	---	All parts are edible; full to part shade; easy to grow.
<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i> Hibiscus, China Rose, Rose-of-China	P	Orange, red or purplish red	Late summer	Citrus/cranberry flavor	---	Subtropical tree but may be grown indoors. Used in many tea flavorings.
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> Rose-of-Sharon	P	Red, white, purple or violet	July to August	Mild, nutty	---	Shrub, prefers well-drained soil; full sun to partial shade; deadhead to keep blooming.
<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> Hyssop	P	Blue, pink or white	July to October	Bitter; similar to tonic	---	Used to flavor Chartreuse, a liquor. Strong flavor, prefers partial shade and well-drained soil.
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> Lavender	P	Lavender, purple pink, white	June to early August	Highly perfumed	Floral	Taste may be very strong depending on the plant.
<i>Levisticum officinale</i> Lovage	B	Yellow or white	August	Mild celery	---	Herb.
<i>Malus</i> sp. Apple or Crabapple	P	White to pink	May	Slightly floral to sour	Sweet floral	Petals may be candied; specimen tree, prefers full sun and fertile soil, seeds are poisonous.
<i>Melissa officinalis</i> Lemon Balm	P	Creamy white	July to August	Lemony, sweet	Lemon	Herb, may be invasive.
<i>Mentha</i> spp. Mint	P	Lavender, pink to white	July to September	Minty; milder than leaves	Fresh, minty	Herb, may be invasive; tolerates a wide range of soils, prefers part shade.
<i>Monarda didyma</i> Bergamot, Bee Balm Oswego Tea	P	Red, pink, white or lavender	July to August	Tea-like, more aromatic than leaves	Sweet/perfumed	Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies; partial shade to full sun; prefers moist, rich soil. Powdery mildew when grown in partial shade.
<i>Muscari atlanticum</i> , <i>M. botryoides</i> , Grape Hyacinth	P	Pink or blue	April to May	Grapey, slightly sour with bitter aftertaste	Grapey	Bulb.

Plant Name	Type <sup>1</sup>	Flower/Color	Bloom	Taste	Fragrance	Comments/Hints
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> Basil	A	White to pale pink	July to frost	Milder than leaves, spicy	---	Sow continuously for several harvests; well-drained rich soil; full sun.
<i>Origanum</i> sp. Oregano	P	White	June to August	Spicy, pungent-like leaves	---	Herb, prefers full sun and dry, alkaline, well-drained soil.
<i>Origanum majorana</i> Marjoram	TP	Pale pink	June to August	Spicy, sweet	---	Herb, prefers full sun and dry, alkaline, well-drained soil.
<i>Pelargonium</i> sp. Scented Geranium	TP	White, red, pink or purple	Varies	Like variety selected i.e., rose, lemon; varies	Mild	Ornamental; prefers full sun, and light, dry, well-drained soil.
<i>Phaseolus coccineus</i> Scarlet Runner Bean	TP	Bright orange to scarlet	July to August	Raw bean but milder	---	Vegetable, flower crunchy; use in salad.
<i>Pisum sativum</i> Garden Pea	A	White, tinged pink	May to June	Raw peas	---	Vegetable; prefers full sun and sandy, well-drained soil.
<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i> Burnet	P	Red	July to August	Cucumber	---	Salad herb; may be invasive, tolerates wide range of soil, sun or part shade.
<i>Prunus</i> sp. Plum	P	Pink to white	April to May	Mild-like flower nectar	Sweet	Petals candy well; pits of mature fruit are poisonous.
<i>Raphanus sativus</i> Radish	A	White, pink or yellow	One month after planting	Spicy	---	Prefer full sun, well-drained, sandy soil but will grow in almost any soil.
<i>Rosa</i> sp. Rose	P	White, pink, yellow, red or orange	May to June, September	Highly perfumed; sweet to bitter	Rose	Ornamental, remove sour petal base; full sun and rich, well-drained soil.
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> Rosemary	TP	Pale blue, dark blue, pink or white	Depends on cultivar	Mild rosemary	Delicate	Herb; do not cook flower; tolerates full sun to partial shade, well-drained, evenly moist soil.
<i>Salvia elegans</i> Pineapple Sage	TP	Scarlet	September	Pineapple/sage overtones	---	Herb; prefers full sun and light, well-drained soil. May be invasive.
<i>Salvia officinalis</i> Garden Sage	P	Blue, purple, white, pink	May to July	Flowery sage, slightly musky	---	Herb; full sun to light shade; sandy, well-drained soil. May be invasive.
<i>Satureja montana</i> Winter Savory	P	Pale blue to purple	July to August	Mildly peppery, spicy	---	Herb; prefers full sun and light, sandy soil.
<i>Satureja hortensis</i> Summer savory	A	Pink	July to August	Mildly peppery, spicy	---	Herb; prefers full sun and light, sandy soil.
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> Lilac	P	White, pink, purple, lilac	April to May	Perfume, slightly bitter	Lilac	Candies well; prefers well-drained alkaline soil and sun to part shade.
<i>Tagetes erecta</i> African Marigold	A	White, gold, yellow or red	May to September	Variable; some cultivars are strong and bitter	Strong, pungent	Ornamental; prefers full sun and well-drained soil.
<i>Tagetes tenuifolia</i> Signet Marigold	A	White, gold, yellow or red	May to September	Citrus; milder than <i>T. erecta</i>	---	Ornamental; prefers full sun and well-drained soil but will tolerate many soils.
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> Dandelion	P	Yellow	May to June; fall	Bitter	---	Eat cooked only; cool weather and full sun; tolerates wide range of soils.
<i>Thymus</i> sp. Thyme	P	Pink, purple, white	July to August	Milder than leaves	---	Herb; most creeping thymes have little flavor.
<i>Trifolium pratense</i> Red Clover	P	Pink, lilac	June to September	Hay	Hay	Scatter florets on salad; tolerates most soils; self sows.
<i>Tropaeolum majus</i> Nasturtium	A	Varies	July to August	Watercress, peppery	---	Container or in salads; grow in full sun and well-drained soil.
<i>Tulbaghia violacea</i> Society Garlic	A or TP	Lilac	Spring	Onion flavor	---	Best in full sun, tolerates partial shade; prefers rich, moist, well-drained soil.
<i>Tulipa</i> sp. Tulip	P	Various except true blue	April to May	Slightly sweet or bitter; little flavor	---	Bulb; best used as garnish or container; prefers full sun to part shade and well-drained soil.
<i>Viola odorata</i> Violet	P	Violet, pink or white	April to May	Sweet	Sweet	Ornamental; candies well; tolerate sun to partial shade and moist, well-drained soil.
<i>Viola</i> X <i>wittrockiana</i> <i>Viola tricolor</i> Pansy or Johnny Jump-Up	A	Violet, white, pink, yellow, multi-colored	May to July	Stronger than violets	---	Ornamental; prefers cool weather; moist rich, loamy soil but will tolerate many soils.
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i> Yucca	P	Creamy white with purple tinge	July	Hint of artichoke, slightly bitter	---	Ornamental; full sun and well-drained, sandy soil.

<sup>1</sup> A = annual; B = biennial; P = perennial; TP = tender perennial