



Edible Flowers



While many people love growing flowers for their beauty and scent, few people take advantage of them in their food preparation. Unfortunately, you can't just buy flowers from the store and eat them because they've most likely been treated with pesticides. If you decide to grow flowers for food, make sure you buy organic plants or seeds. Be sure you are buying an edible flower; many of them have look-a-likes that are not edible. Always do your research before trying edible flowers and do not try them if you have asthma, allergies, or hay fever. Collect flowers in cool weather or early morning, and use flowers that are at their peak. These are just a few of the edible flowers available:

Calendula: An annual. Comes in yellow, gold, or orange flowers and has a tangy, peppery taste. Only the petals are edible. They like rich, well-drained soil, and full sun to partial shade. They are exceptionally tolerant of cold weather in fall. They have medicinal and nutritional value. They're often used to bring a zest to salads, and can be added to soups or cream cheese to add a mild peppery flavor.

Dandelion: A lovely yellow bloom. They do well in full sun to partial shade, and are not too picky about their soil. The flowers can be used in salads or deep-fried in butter, and are high in protein. It is also known for use in making wine. The leaves are a little bitter, but high in calcium, iron, and potassium. The leaves are used in salads, soups, and casseroles. The root is also edible.

Lavender: A shrub. Have light purple flowers and a sweet flavor. It likes full sun, requires well-drained soil, and can tolerate drought. It does best in alkaline soil. I have used lavender in a variety of dishes, from cookies, to flavoring sugar, to a wonder fish dish. It is also an ingredient in the well-known French herb mixture 'herbes de Provence'.

Nasturtium: An annual. It comes in shades of white to red and has a peppery flavor. The flowers, leaves, and seedpods are all edible. They prefer sandy soils, but will do well in most well-drained soil type. They do well in full sun or partial shade and require regular water. Some species can tolerate drought conditions. They are used in salads and as garnish, and I've found nasturtium recipes ranging from pesto to omelets.

Pansy: An annual. Comes in violet, white, pink, yellow, or multi-colored flowers and has a sweet flavor. They do well in full sun or partial shade, and require regular water. Some species can tolerate some drought. They are good in salads and jellies, and are high in vitamin C and iron.

Violet: A perennial. Comes in purple, yellow, or blue flowers and has a strong, sweet flavor. They do best in partial or complete shade, and require regular water. They are good in salads, syrups, and jellies, and are also high in vitamin C and iron.

Submitted by: Tammy Cripe, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County