

[12 Edible Flowers That Are Pollinator-friendly, Too!](#)

Grow beautiful blossoms that attract bees and butterflies as well as add color and flavor to your favorite meal.

by Kiringai EssieMay 6, 2013

Some flowers are edible and can be used as garnishes in salads and on cakes or incorporated into teas, baked goods, soups and stews. If you're like me, you garden with both practicality and aesthetics in mind. While I want my garden to be a place where I can find rest and pleasure, I also want to maximize my use of space, filling it with food-producing and pollinator-friendly plants. That's why I'm so drawn to the idea of edible flowers.

Many flowers that add color and flair to garden beds can also be nutritious culinary treats, natural medicinal treatments, and nectar sources for beneficial bees and butterflies. As a result, more and more farmers—and the customers they serve—are playing with their food by introducing fresh, colorful, tasty flowers to common fare.

"[Edible flowers are] colorful and fun to use and are a wonderful way to add intrigue to recipes," says Elizabeth Waller, of Amazing Heart Farm in Orrtanna, Pa. "People are always eager to learn new ways to work with fresh produce, and we find they are especially excited to discover that some of the flowers in their own flower gardens are actually edible!"

Some of Waller's favorite edible flowers include peppery nasturtiums, licorice-flavored anise hyssop and tangy calendula, and she's not alone in her advocacy for incorporating these pretty blossoms into the garden and kitchen. In 2000, Marisha Auerbach, of Herb'n Wisdom in Portland, Ore., began selling edible flowers to restaurants and educating people about how to incorporate them into their diets. While she's enamored with finding new ways to cook up tulips, pansies and other floral favorites, she doesn't overlook their garden impact.

"By planting edible flowers, we are increasing the forage for pollinators in the garden," she says. "Edible flowers are really easy to grow and many of them perennialize in gardens. You get great yields for little effort."

Before you start harvesting flowers for the kitchen, keep these safety tips in mind:

- **Ensure the flowers you want to eat are edible.**
Consult an experienced farmer or forager before eating flowers. Some flower species might only have a few edible varieties, so know what you're consuming before you pop it in your mouth.
- **Harvest from chemical-free areas.**
Do not harvest or forage in areas that have been treated with pesticides or herbicides. Also, avoid eating nursery-grown flowers, unless you're certain they're organic and food-grade.

- **Eat only the edible parts of the flower.**

For some flowers, the whole plant (flower, leaves, stems and roots) are edible, while you might only be able to eat certain parts of others. Also, you will need to remove the stamen, pistil and sepals of most blossoms. Again, always consult a knowledgeable source before you dig in.

1. Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)

Praised for their beauty, hollyhocks have a light, slightly bitter, vegetal flavor. The petals, roots and leaves can be used in teas, and the blossoms can be used as a dip bowl, bringing flair to a springtime table. Plant hollyhocks in soil with a pH of 6.0 to 8.0 and in a location where they'll receive full sun and shelter from wind. Water plants thoroughly, avoiding leaves, and remove seed heads so that you can enjoy blooms year after year. While hollyhocks are generally considered safe to consume, there hasn't been a lot of research on their use as food, so avoid eating them if you're pregnant.

2. Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Also called pot marigold, calendula has beautiful orange blossoms that can be used to color rice and other dishes, though it's more commonly revered for its medicinal properties. Calendula is often added to topical ointments and teas to treat rashes, ulcers, muscle pains and more. However, its tangy, peppery flowers can also be enjoyed simply as a salad garnish. Calendula prefers a cool climate and tolerates frost well, which when taking into account its soil-cleansing roots, makes it an excellent candidate as a fall-garden cover crop. Direct-seed calendula ¼ inch deep in well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0 and in a location with full sun to partial shade. Provide 1 to 1½ inches of water per week, and deadhead spent flowers.

3. Lemon (*Citrus limon*)

If you grow a lemon tree, you likely count on the flowers as a gateway to refreshing citrus fruit, but feel free to occasionally pluck the fragrant blooms for a lovely dessert garnish or a decorative addition to citrus water. Lemon trees grow best in well-drained soil with a soil pH of 5.5 to 6.5 and with access to full sun. Give the tree a thorough watering every couple weeks to keep it well-hydrated.

4. Hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*)

Hyssop is a versatile, mint-flavored flower that can be added to a number of dishes, from soups, sauces and casseroles to pickles and preserves. Grow hyssop in light, dry, rocky, well-drained soil with a pH between 4.5 and 8.3, and sow seeds 1/4 inch deep at 12-inch spacing. Avoid eating hyssop if pregnant or have a history of seizures.

5. Borage (*Borago officinalis*)

For gardeners wanting to attract more pollinators to the garden plot, borage is a natural solution. Not only do the bright-blue flowers add a sense of whimsy to the garden, the tasty annual is super-easy to grow and many parts of the plants can be used in the kitchen: Eat the leaves raw or sautéed; candy the leaves or the stem; and brighten up a salad with the flowers. However you decide to prepare it, use borage within three to four hours of harvest and incorporate it sparingly into your diet, as it's a diuretic. Borage grows well in sandy to loamy soil with a soil pH of 4.5 to 8.3. Place it in full to partial sun where it can be sheltered from the wind. Sow seeds shallowly at 12-inch spacing after the last frost. Many gardeners will companion-plant borage with strawberries to get a better berry yield.

6. Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)

Often thought of as a cover crop or simply a weed, red clover's sweet flowers add delicate flavor to an array of dishes. Add raw flowers to salads, soups and cold drinks or dry them for use in teas. The stems and leaves are also edible and have a number of medicinal uses, from protecting against heart disease and cancer to reducing the effects of menopause; it's also used topically to treat skin conditions and in tea for suppressing a cough. Use caution when harvesting and consuming red clover. Only forage from areas you're certain are free from herbicides and pesticides. Consume the plant sparingly, as it can cause bloating, and do not eat if wilted or moldy. Talk to a doctor before using if pregnant, diagnosed with breast cancer, have thin blood or are on anti-coagulant medications.

7. Scented Geraniums (*Pelargonium* spp.)

For the playful gardener, scented geraniums are an obvious pick. With varieties ranging in flavors, from rose and mint to fruit and spice, scented geraniums are typically grown for their aroma, but their edibility means they can be added to a number of homemade goodies. Use the flowers and leaves to flavor sugars, syrups, oils or other infusions. Of course, try them in teas, or get creative by incorporating them into your favorite baked goods. (Rose scented geranium cupcakes, anyone?) Scented geranium flowers grow well in full sun, though they appreciate some shade in hotter climates. Plant in well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Overwinter indoors, and cut or pinch back spent blossoms.

8. Squash (*Cucurbita pepo*)

Obviously, squash fruits are a beloved part of a farmer's garden, but squash flowers are also a fun introduction to the world of edible flowers. More and more home cooks are finding ways to incorporate them into their everyday cooking. An online search for squash-flower recipes will teach you to batter and fry them, stuff them with cheese, stir-fry them, and even add them to omelets and quesadillas. With their mild, floral to vegetal flavor, it's not difficult to dream up a way to eat squash flowers. Grow squash flowers just as you would the crop: in full sun and

friable, well-drained soil high in organic matter. A soil pH of 6.0 to 6.7 is best. Use squash flowers immediately after harvesting.

9. Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)

A woodland perennial, the primrose often finds a place in ornamental gardens, but their value-added appeal in the kitchen is not something to be overlooked. The flowers and leaves have a mild to tangy flavor and can be added to salads, soups, syrups and teas. The flower buds can also be pickled or fermented for wine. Maintaining woodland conditions is key to growing the primrose. It grows well in most soils, especially clay, but prefers shaded areas, though full sun is OK in cooler climates. Keep the soil moist and at a pH of 5.5 to 7.0.

10. Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*)

Known as the poor man's saffron, safflower petals, like calendula, can be used to color rice and other foods or as a less-expensive substitute in recipes that call for saffron. The leaves and seeds are also edible: Sauté leaves for a slightly bitter accompaniment to other garden veggies or press the seeds into oil. Avoid cooking with safflower if pregnant or nursing or have a bleeding condition, such as hemorrhages, clots or ulcers. Those with a ragweed allergy will also want to take caution when eating safflower. Safflower grows well in hot, dry areas with no more than 15 inches yearly rainfall. Plant in deep, fertile, well-drained soil that has a high water-holding capacity and pH around 6.0. Sow 1 to 1½ inches deep at a rate of 20 to 25 pounds per acre.

11. Pansy (*Viola x wittrockiana*)

The pansy, along with its viola and Johnny jump-up cousins, is a mild wintergreen-flavored flower that's wildly growing in popularity as a candied garnish on desserts and appetizers. Unlike most other edible flowers, which need the pistils, stamens and sepals removed before eating, the entire pansy flower can be consumed. Despite pansies being readily accessible at the local nursery, you should only consume flowers raised for edible purposes. Many nursery-grown pansies are treated with herbicides and pesticides that are unsafe to eat. To grow pansies, plant in full sun to partial shade at 7- to 12-inch spacing. Soil should be fertile, well-drained and rich in organic matter at a pH of 5.6 to 6.0. Rotate pansy beds every three years to prevent the spread of disease.

12. Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)

Anise hyssop has a sweet, strong licorice flavor that lends itself well to teas and baked goods, but its use is open to experimentation and is often treated much like culinary lavender. Both its flowers and leaves are edible, and it has a history of medicinal uses, from cold and cough treatments to digestive aids. It can also be used as a breath freshener! Anise hyssop is fairly easy to grow, as it tolerates both dry and moist soil. Plant it in full sun to light shade in well-drained soil with a pH between 6.0 and 7.0.

Source: <https://www.hobbyfarms.com/12-edible-flowers-that-are-pollinator-friendly-too-6/>