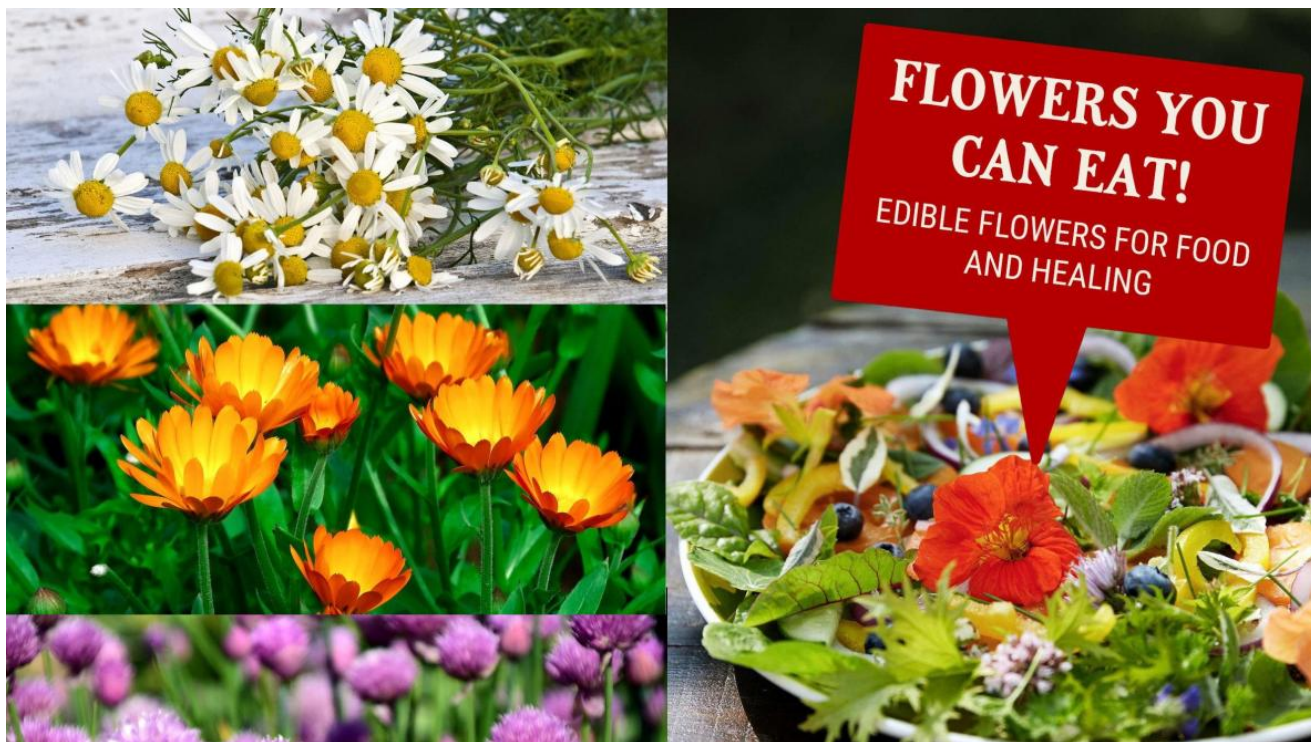


# Edible Flowers: Flowers for Food and Healing

 [almanac.com/growing-edible-flowers-your-garden](https://almanac.com/growing-edible-flowers-your-garden)



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So many flowers are not only beautiful but also completely edible, adding color and flavor to salads, soups, pastas, drinks, and desserts. In fact, in ancient times, flowers were grown more for scent and flavor than looks alone. Here are **15 edible flowers** that are also easy to grow.

For centuries, humans have foraged or cultivated flowers and flower buds for food, drink, and medicine. Think of squash blossoms in Italian food, chamomile or jasmine tea, and rose petals in Indian food. Some are spicy, and some herb-y, some are fragrant. All are colorful.

## Flowers You Can Eat

We're seeing a renewed interest in edible flowers. There are hundreds of common wild and cultivated plants with petals and buds which are edible. Not only are these flowers pretty in the garden, but they will add color, diversity, and new flavor to your meals.

If you'd like to grow some flowers, why not choose varieties that are also edible? Then dress up your dishes with buds and flowers. Try pansies in a salad, nasturtiums over pasta or in sandwiches! Adventurous folks might also want to explore some of the traditional medicinal uses of common flowers.



When preparing most flowers (exceptions: squash, violets, and nasturtiums) for food or beverage, use only the petals for best flavor. Remove the sepals, as well as the pistils and stamens. In case you've forgotten your flower anatomy, here's help.

## 15 Flowers You Can Eat!

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Looking to grow your own edible flowers? While there are hundreds of choices, here are 15 of our favorites.

### 1. Nasturtium

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Nasturtium sits at the top of my list. It's easy to grow from seed, indoors or out, and every above-ground part is edible. They can be sown as seeds or bought as bedding plants in the spring. Some believe that they help keep the cucumber beetle away so I sow mine right in the same beds with the cukes. Tying the cucumbers up a fence the nasturtiums can flow around their feet on the ground. See how to grow nasturtium.



Upon tasting nasturtium, you first taste a sweet essence from the nectar, followed by a bold peppery tang. Throw them in whole or turn to pieces to a salad or other dish. Nasturtium leaves and flowers are rich in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds, and have a long history of medicinal use in indigenous cultures for urinary-tract, cardiovascular, and respiratory disorders.



Vibrant nasturtiums bring vibrant color and a punchy pepper flavor to dishes. Credit: L. Mikhailovskaya/Shutterstock

## 2. Violas

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I've already written about my love of the irrepressible wild violets (*Viola sororia* or *Viola odorata*) that pop up all over my lawns and gardens. Give it a read, and tend your lawn violets with care! Violas and Pansies are perennials which also belong to the genus *Viola* but often treated as annual plants. These happy-faced flowers are among the first to get planted in the spring. See how to grow pansies.



All violas and their leaves are both edible and medicinal. They can be crystalized, used in syrups, and in baking. See our recipe for violet flower infused jelly!



*Pansy petals do not have a lot of flavor (a mild wintergreen) but always bring smiles when they arrive on plate—or, cake!*

### **3. Calendula**

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These daisy-like annual flowers come in yellows and oranges with tan and soft pink varieties available. See how to grow calendula. Calendula petals will add color and spice to just about any cooked or fresh dish.



They can be added to a dish whole or the petals can be carefully removed and tossed into salads, stir-fries, or your favorite rice dishes for a peppery flavor. The flowers can be used in place of saffron to impart a golden yellow hue to dishes, even bread rolls. They are also easy to dry. Pull the petals and put them on a cookie tray.



Leave this in a very dry spot; the top of a warm closet, an attic or an oven with a pilot light. After a couple of days, they can be collected and put in a sealed jar for storage.





Calendulas are also known for their healing properties. You'll find calendula listed as an ingredient in many high-end skincare products and healing creams. Here's a nice recipe for **homemade calendula oil or cream**: Pull the petals from enough dried or fresh calendula blossoms to give you a cup. Add petals to 200 ml (about 1 cup) of olive oil in a large glass jar with a lid; seal and leave in a sunny window or outside for a week or two. After straining out the petals, you can use the oil as is, or heat it in a double boiler with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of melted beeswax to make a spreadable cream.



## 4. Marigolds

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Some marigolds are edible, too. There is a series called “gems” that are just delightful. ‘Lemon Gem’ is bright yellow while ‘Tangerine Gem’ is a lovely orange. They don’t have a lot of taste but dress up a dish with pizzaz. The plants also, when rubbed, give off a lemony scent that is a delightful aroma when wandering in the garden.

I plant my marigolds as a companion plant around broccoli, Brussel’s sprouts, and cabbage to help deter the cabbage moth. See how to plant marigolds.







Many small edible flowers such as violas and marigolds can be added to ice cubes for a cocktail, event, and just because! Fill the tray half-way, add flower, and add a few drops of water. Freeze over night, and then fill ice trays completely to freeze overnight again.



## 5. Chives

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Chives with their delicate purple flower can also be added to the list. These are very spicy and might be best utilized pulled apart and used judiciously like a spice. They can also be made into chive vinegar. Put the flowers into a clear jar with organic vinegar and leave in the Sun for a couple of weeks. Strain out the buds and keep in a sealed jar in the pantry. See how to grow chives.



## 6. Roses

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All roses are edible. The more aromatic the rose, the more flavor it will have. *Rosa rugosa* is probably the most common edible rose. Harvest roses early in the day. To encourage more blooms, cut flowers at a 45-degree angle down to the lowest, outward-facing blossoms. To use roses, gently pull the petals off the flower and cut off the whitish base. See how to grow roses.

Strew rose petals across a fresh salad, brew them into tea, or use the entire blossoms to decorate a cake. The petals can also be made into jam. In autumn, you can make rose hip syrup.



## **7. Sunflowers**

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Carefully separate the petals and sprinkle them into salads. For a real treat, harvest the unopened buds, remove the sepals, and steam the buds until tender. Meaty and filling, they taste like artichoke. Mmmm! See how to grow sunflowers.





## **8. Chamomile**

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Dating back at least 2000 years to the ancient Egyptians, people have used dried chamomile flowers for medicine, cosmetics, and perfumes.

Dried or fresh, chamomile tea is renowned as a safe and gentle calming and sleep-promoting agent. It's readily available in stores (buy flowers in bulk), and easy to grow in the home garden. Read more about chamomile tea and healing.



## 9. Hibiscus

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Try making your own hibiscus syrup for cocktails! The flowers are proven to lower blood pressure if used in tea. The calyx of the Roselle variety makes an especially wonderful tea (or jelly due to the high pectin content of the flowers). The flavor is tart and zingy and the color is a vibrant cranberry. See how to grow hibiscus flowers.



## 10. Scented Geraniums

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Both the flowers and the leaves of scented geraniums are completely edible. Not only are they pretty but they add a fine aroma to salads, meat dishes, and desserts. The aroma depends on the scent! For example, lemon-scented geraniums add a lemon zest to salads and sorbet. See how to grow scented geraniums.



## 11. Fennel

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All parts of the fennel plant are edible. It's a very tall plant in the carrot family with an umbel type flower similar to dill, coriander, and caraway.

Fennel's flower heads contribute a delicious licorice flavor to any dish. Sprinkle over potato salad. Even a small bit of fennel flower adds an anise flavor to stews, sauces, soups and meat rubs. Of course, the bulbs can be eaten raw, broiled or pickled. The seeds are commonly used as an after-dinner digestive aid in some countries.



## 12. Daylily

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Daylilies are a popular staple in Asian cuisine. Every part of the daylily plant is edible: you can pluck the young shoots, boil the tubers like potatoes, or spruce up your salads with its bright orange petals. See how to grow daylilies.

Harvested fresh, I like to sauté the plump buds and meaty flowers in a little oil or butter, then season with salt and pepper. Some people stuff the just-opened blossom with a favorite stuffing mix, then saute the stuffed flowers in a little oil or poach them in broth. Use only freshly harvested buds/flowers. The flowers are wonderful in stir-fries! (**Note:** The day "lily" is not related to other types of lilies. Most other lilies are in fact NOT edible.)



### **13. Dandelions**

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Let's not forget about dandelions! In early spring, young dandelion leaves are particularly delicious when they are underground and just about to emerge. These can be washed carefully and steamed for a few minutes. Serve with salt and butter. See dandelion recipes for cooking dandelion greens, making dandelion wine, canning dandelion jelly, and even frying the dandelion blossoms .



## 14. Borage

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Borage is one of our favorite herbs to grow. Both the blue flowers and the young leaves (the older ones get too hairy) are edible, lending a cucumber-like flavor to salads and soups. The flowers are also wonderful in a summer drink.

Also, borage is an excellent companion in the vegetable garden bed as it deters pests and attracts beneficials to pollinate your veggies!



## 15. Squash Blossoms

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Squash blossoms are edible, especially right as they drop. Just Google “squash blossoms” and you’ll see all the recipes! They’re most commonly dipped in light batters and fried or stuffed with cheesy fillings, dusted with flour and fried or used as a garnish. Here’s an easy recipe with squash blossoms and eggs.

Zucchini and summer squash are, of course, incredibly prolific. Learn more about growing zucchini.





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Squash blossoms aren't the only vegetable flower that's edible. For example, all brassica flowers are edible (cauliflower, cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, radish, arugula). However, the flowers of the Nightshade family are NOT edible, including flowers of tomato, potato, eggplant, and pepper (capsicum). Asparagus flowers (and berries) are also toxic.

## **Edible Herbs**

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Keep in mind that the blossoms of many herbs are edible, and usually taste like a milder version of the leaf. Add rosemary flowers to butter! Sprinkle chive flowers on potato salad. Add lemon verbena to lemonade or sparkling water. Below are 10 herbs to try and here's how to grow herbs.

1. Oregano/Marjoram
2. Mint
3. Chive
4. Cilantro
5. Lemon verbena
6. Thyme
7. Rosemary
8. Basil
9. Sage
10. Wild garlic flowers



## **Invasive/Non-Native Edible Flowers**

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Keep in mind that many of the invasive plants in your yard are edible, too! Feed two birds with one stone by removing these plants and eating them, too.

White clover (*Trifolium repens*) is especially enjoyable and tastes a little bit like green beans! Here are 10 invasives/non-natives that you may find in your yard or nearby woodlands.

1. White Clover
2. Red Deadnettle
3. Dandelion\*
4. Garlic Mustard
5. Forsythia
6. Creeping Charlie
7. Chickweed
8. Winter Bittercress
9. Little Bur Clover
10. Henbit

\*Yes, the common dandelion is a non-native and often invasive. If you're concerned about foraging for dandelion blossoms because it's bee food, this is not as big an issue as it's been made out to be. Dandelions are actually not the best food for our native bees. See best flowers to plant for bees.



## Before You Go Picking ...

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The right flower can be a lovely addition to a dish, but before you go picking, be aware of the following:

- Don't eat commercially grown flowers or flowers that came from a florist; they could have been sprayed.
- Don't forage wild flowers on treated lawns or along roads or in any place that has been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides.
- Never eat a flower you can't identify with absolute certainty and know to be safe. Many flowers are not edible including sweet peas, hydrangeas, foxglove, columbines, oleander, rhododendrons, and delphiniums. See this [Edible Flowers Chart](#) to learn what's safe.
- There's a great app called "Seek" by iNaturalist to help with identification but always do more research to be 100% positive what parts are edible, whether you can eat it raw, different ways it may look, and poisonous lookalikes. Maybe start with dandelions and things you know and can't mess up and go from there. Good luck!
- Introduce a new edible flower or floral tea slowly and gradually, especially if you have a serious ragweed or other pollen allergy. On your first try, take a few deep sniffs, then only a bite or two.
- Because flowers may contain powerful phytochemicals (which confer their healing virtues, as well as their flavors and colors), check with your healthcare professional before eating edible flowers if you're pregnant or taking prescription drugs.

**Now check out our beautiful video to see edible flowers and learn how to use them.**



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/iMPHEEMDtx4>

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