UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Edible Flowers

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Reviewed: November 2026

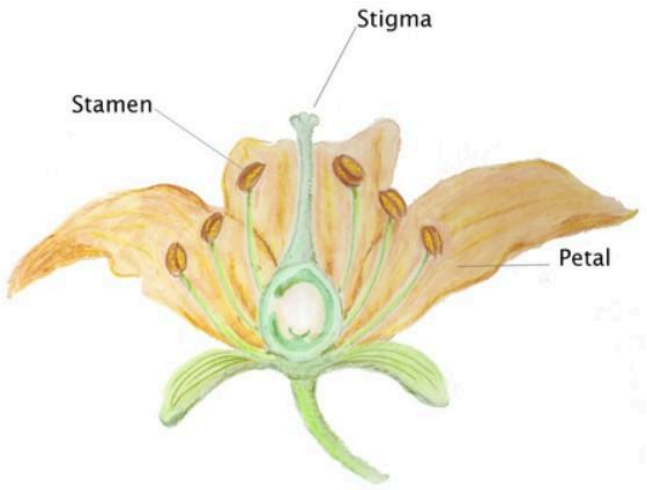
Why edible flowers?

Edible flowers offer a simple way to add color, texture, and unique flavors to meals. Many species contain benefits, including vitamins, minerals, fiber, and protein. Research has identified health benefits such as anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, and anti-microbial properties in several commonly consumed flowers. For those who are new to edible flowers, it is best to begin slowly and try one plant species at a time. Edible doesn't always mean palatable. This approach helps you learn how each flower tastes, possible allergen sensitivities, and how it pairs with foods and culinary applications. Besides the culinary applications, edible flowers can be a wonderful addition to a space through their beauty, pollinator and beneficial attractiveness, and potential as companion plants.

Safety First

What Makes a Flower Edible?

Consider safety first when consuming edible flowers. Only eat flowers that you can positively identify as edible, and always verify the scientific name, as common names often overlap across unrelated species. Use petals primarily, and separate them from stems, sepals, pollen, and reproductive structures to minimize allergens and bitterness. Some flowers are best consumed fresh, while others may lose their desirable qualities when dried. Because flowers readily absorb substances from their surroundings, avoid harvesting or growing them in areas exposed to pollutants, pet waste, or manure. Ensure clean growing conditions and proper handling to help maintain safety and flavor quality.



Generalized flower anatomy. It is best to eat petals only (University of Minnesota Extension).

Growing Edible Flowers

The most reliable way to ensure edible flowers are free from harmful residues is to start plants from seed. When buying transplants, ask the nursery about pesticide history and avoid plants treated with systemic products if you intend to consume the flowers. The growing location is equally as impactful as exposure to pesticide sprays. Choose sites away from roadsides, pet activity, and areas where fertilizers or manure may contact the petals. Pest management needs vary between indoor and outdoor production. Outdoor environments host a wider range of pests but benefit from natural biological control, while indoor production limits pest diversity but lacks natural predators. Aphids and thrips are common challenges in both settings. Cultural practices, sanitation, and organic pesticide options such as horticultural oils and soaps can help manage pests, though repeated applications may be necessary. If other pesticides are used, confirm that the product is labeled for use on edible flowers.



Marigolds grown without pesticides and used as a companion plant to reduce insect damage on zucchini plants.

Harvesting & Preparing Flowers

Proper harvesting ensures the best quality and flavor. Pick flowers in the early morning when petals are fresh and at least 80 percent open. Some insects may shelter inside flowers, so check for hiding insects before bringing the petals inside. If petals are damp, gently blot them dry to reduce the risk of mold. Store them whole in a breathable container, like a clamshell. A sandwich bag may work but reduces shelf life. Depending on species, edible flowers typically last 3-10 days, with thicker petals maintaining quality longer. Before consumption, remove petals from stems and sepals, rinse thoroughly, and ensure no pollen or reproductive parts remain. Discard flowers once they begin to deteriorate. Do not eat petals that show signs of mold. They can also be saved for later use by drying the petals.

Using Edible Flowers

Edible flowers have been incorporated into culinary traditions for centuries, appearing in dishes from Ancient Egyptian, Roman, and Victorian cultures. Today, beverages represent one of the most popular uses. Many consumers start with teas made from chamomile, rose, hibiscus, or lavender, or experiment at home by steeping fresh petals. Edible flowers can also be used as garnishes, added to salads, incorporated into baked goods, or frozen into desserts. Baking may soften flavors or alter textures, so experimentation is encouraged to determine which flowers perform best in different recipes. Because flavor varies by species, cultivar, and even flower color, trying a range of flowers can help you discover which ones best suit your culinary preferences.



A salad with echinacea, dahlia, dianthus, and violas.

Edible Flower Species

The list below contains many edible ornamental flower species. Many fruit, vegetable, and herb flowers are edible but have not been included in this list. Many factors, including growing environment, flower structure, and flower color, can alter flavors, so do not expect every flower in the same species to taste the same. The inclusion on the list is specific to petals and not other plant parts.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Flavor Note	Zones	Notes
Acca selloviana	Pineapple Guava	Floral flavor; papaya or exotic melon	8-10	Fruit can be eaten
Acmella oleracea	Buzz Button	Citrus, spicy	9-11	Temporary mouth numbing
Agastache foeniculum	Anise Hyssop	Mint	4-8	
Alcea rosea	Hollyhock	Mild, slightly earthy	5-9	Best as garnish
Antirrhinum majus	Snapdragon	Leafy, sweet	7-10	
Begonia x *tuberhybrida*	Tuberous Begonia	Citrus	9-11	**Only hybrids are edible**
Bellis perennis	English Daisy	Mild to bitter	4-8	
Borago officinalis	Borage; Starflower	Cucumber	2-11	
Calendula officinalis	Calendula; Pot Marigold	Tangy and peppery	2-11	
Campanula spp.	Bellflower	Mild, sweet, floral	3.-8	Similar appearance to toxic flowers, so make sure to properly identify
Carthamus tinctorius	Safflower	Bitter flavor	2-11	
Celosia argentea	Cockscomb	Mild, sweet, nutty	10-11	
Centaurea cyanus	Cornflower; Bachelor's Button	Floral, cucumber	2-11	
Cercis canadensis	Redbud	Beanlike to tart apple	4-9	
Cichorium intybus	Chicory	Pleasant, mildly bitter	3-8	
Chamaemelum nobile	English chamomile	Sweet apple flavor	4-9	Be cautious if allergen-sensitive
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum	Oxeye Daisy	Mild	1-10	
Clitoria ternatea	Butterfly Pea	Mild, earthy	10-12	Dries well for teas
Cosmos sulphureus	Klondike Cosmos	Herbal, peppery	2-11	
Cosmos caudatus	Ulam raja	Citrus, pine	9-11	
Dahlia spp.	Dahlia	Water chestnut, leafy	7-10	
Chrysanthemum x morifolium	Garden Chrysanthemum	Pungent	5-9	
Dianthus spp.	Dianthus; Cheddar Pinks	Sweet, cloves	4-9	
Echinacea spp.	Echinacea; Coneflower	Earthy, floral	3-8	Dries well for teas
Fuchsia boliviana	Bolivian Fuschia	Sweet	9-11	**Many but not all Fuchsia species are edible. Check first**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Flavor Note	Zones	Notes
Gladiolus spp.	Gladiolus	Lettuce	7-10	Pollen and anthers must be removed
Glebionis coronaria	Crown Daisy	Mild	3-10	
Hemerocallis fulva	Daylily	Cooked, combination of asparagus/zucchini	3-8	All parts are edible
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis	Hibiscus	Citrus/cranberry flavor	9-11	
Hibiscus syriacus	Rose of Sharon	Mild, nutty	5-9	
Hyssopus officinalis	Hyssop	Bitter; similar to tonic	4-9	
Hosta spp.	Hosta	Mild, sweet	3-9	Leaves and roots also edible
Impatiens walleriana	Common impatiens	Mild	10-11	Not all impatiens species are edible
Jasminum officinale	Jasmine	Floral	7-10	**Not all jasmine species are edible**
Lavandula angustifolia	Lavender	Floral	5-9	Dries well for teas
Lobularia maritima	Sweet Alyssum	Sweet, honey	5-9	
Magnolia spp.	Magnolia	Spicy, floral	5-8	
Matricaria chamomilla	German Chamomile	Floral, honey, apple	2-9	
Monarda spp.	Bee Balm	Mint	4-9	
Pelargonium spp.	Scented Geranium	Floral; Varies	9-11	
Portulaca oleracea	Common purslane	Earthy, savory	2-11	Leaves and stems are edible
Phlox paniculata	Autumn Phlox	Peppery	4-8	Not all phlox species are edible
Plumeria rubra	Frangipani	Sweet, honey	10-12	
Rosa spp.	Rose	Floral, sweet	5-11	
Salvia elegans	Pineapple Sage	Pineapple, sage	8-10	
Salvia officinalis	Garden Sage	Flowery, sage	4-8	
Sambucus nigra	Elderflower	Floral, fruity	5-7	Only cooked only
Sanguisorba minor	Burnet	Cucumber	4-8	
Syringa vulgaris	Lilac	Perfume	3-7	
Tagetes spp.	Marigolds	Citrus, peppery	2-11	
Taraxacum officinale	Dandelion	Bitter	2-11	Eat cooked only. Do not eat sprayed material from landscapes.
Trifolium pratense	Red Clover	Hay	3-9	
Tropaeolum majus	Nasturtium	Watercress, peppery	2-11	
Tulbaghia violacea	Society Garlic	Garlic	7-10	Very strong, use lightly

Scientific Name	Common Name	Flavor Note	Zones	Notes
Viola spp.	Viola	Leafy, sweet	1-10	
Yucca filamentosa	Yucca	Artichoke, bitter	4-10	
Zinnia spp.	Zinnia	Leafy, bitter	3-10	Very species-dependent flavor

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