

Edible Flowers from the Yard

If you have too many flowers in the yard or just want to make your salad look different add some of the flowers. Several blossoms commonly found in flower gardens are edible. A partial list follows.

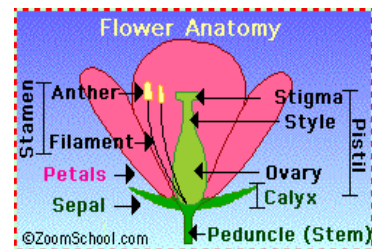
Apple	Lavender
Borage flowers	Lemon mint
Basil	Lilac
Calendula	Nasturtium
Chive	Garden pea
Florist chrysanthemum (C x morifolium)	Pinks (dianthus sp.)
Garland chrysanthemum (C. coronarium)	Rose
Oxeye Daisy (C. leucanthemum)	Sage
Dandelion	Scarlet runner bean
Daylily	Scented geranium
Grape hyacinth	Squash
Hollyhock	Thyme
Honeysuckle	Violet
	Yucca.

If you raise these tasty posies with care, you can pluck them from your own garden thereby having a large ready supply at all times. If you have not cultivated your own garden, try exploring gourmet markets, specialty spice stores or farmers markets for blossoms to include in your menu. This is where edible flowers might be sold. Do not go to the florist, as commercially grown bouquets are generally toxic due to cultivation methods and are not the ideal ingredients for eating.

Edible flowers are extremely fragile. While waiting to cook flowers, place the stems in a bit of water. When ready to prepare them, delicately rinse each flower in cold water, and then dry, carefully blotting each with a paper towel. Remove the stems, using a knife if necessary. Using tweezers, gently remove the pistil, petals and small leaves. (see diagram)

Flowers can be consumed raw, cooked, or infused in sauce. They perk up dishes and complement appetizers, main courses or desserts. Nasturtiums, Primrose, Borage flowers, Oxeye Daisy, and Daylily are all eaten raw in salads. It is important to choose the flower according to its flavor, taking into consideration how each distinct taste will correspond with other ingredients.

Edible flowers also make a lovely addition to many desserts. For example, locust flowers can be soaked in rum and sugar, then fried. Violets or Rose petals can be crystallized and used to decorate fruit salads, flan or cake. To crystallize flowers dip the flowers in corn syrup and arabic gum, and then sprinkle powdered sugar on top before they have dried.



Apples and peaches are members of the rose family and the Rosa Rugosa will produce an edible rose hip after the blooming season is over. While most people remove the hip, it can be eaten raw (after washing) or used in making tea. The flowers of miniature Roses can be placed in ice cube trays and frozen in water to add color and flavor for summer drinks.

Daylily leaves and flowers are edible, but select only from plants you know have not been sprayed with insecticide or fungicide. Young foliage (three to five inches long) can be simmered or stir-fried. Flower buds and blossoms can be consumed at all stages of their growth. Tight buds can be used in salads, boiled, pickled or stir-fried. Half open and fully open blooms can be dipped in a light batter and deep-fried. Young flowers and buds can be strung and air-dried. These are commonly referred to as “golden needles” in Chinese cooking. Before using, soak the dried flowers in warm water for a few minutes to soften.

For more information on edible flowers, search the Internet using the words “edible flowers”. You will find a great many sites and books on edible flowers. But remember the following rules:

1. Eat only those flowers you are positive are edible.
2. All garnishes on restaurant food plates may not be edible.
3. Don't eat flowers from florists, nurseries or garden centers. They may have been treated with pesticides not labeled for food crops.
4. Eat only the flower petals.
5. Be careful regarding allergies.

For more information on edible flowers and other gardening practices contact the Chesapeake Master Gardeners in the Chesapeake Office of Virginia Cooperative Extension, 310 Shea Drive in the Chesapeake Municipal Center off of Cedar Road. Their phone number is 382-6348 or by e-mail them at gardener@agri.city.chesapeake.va.us.

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