



## Edible Flower Chart: *How To Choose Edible Flowers*

**Begonia** - Tuberous begonias and Waxed begonias

**Tuberous Begonias** (*Begonia X tuberosa*) - The leaves, flowers, and stems are edible. Begonia blossoms have a citrus-sour taste. The petals are used in salads and as a garnish. Stems, also, can be used in place of rhubarb. The flowers and stems contain oxalic acid and should not be consumed by individuals suffering from gout, kidney stones, or rheumatism.

**Wax Begonias** (*Begonia cucullata*) - The fleshy leaves and flowers are edible raw or cooked. They can have a slight bitter after taste and if in water most of the time, a hint of swamp in their flavor.

**Calendula** (*Calendula officinalis*) - Also called Marigolds. A wonderful edible flower. Flavors range from spicy to bitter, tangy to peppery. Their sharp taste resembles saffron (also known as Poor Man's Saffron). Has pretty petals in golden-orange hues. Sprinkle them on soups, pasta or rice dishes, herb butters, and salads. Petals add a yellow tint to soups, spreads, and scrambled eggs. Only the petals are edible.

**Carnations** (*Dianthus caryophyllus* - aka *Dianthus*) - Carnations can be steeped in wine, candy, or use as cake decoration. To use the surprisingly sweet petals in desserts, cut them away from the bitter white base of the flower. *Dianthus* are the miniature member of the carnation family with light clove-like or nutmeg scent. Petals add color to salads or aspics. Carnation petals are one of secret ingredients that has been used to make Chartreuse, a French liqueur, since the 17th century.

**Chrysanthemums** (*Chrysanthemum coronarium*) - Tangy, slightly bitter, ranging in colors from red, white, yellow and orange. They range in taste from faint peppery to mild cauliflower. They could be blanched first and then scatter the petals on a salad. The leaves can also be used to flavor vinegar. Always remove the bitter flower base and use petals only. Young leaves and stems of the Crown Daisy, also known as Chop Suey Greens or Shingiku in Japan, are widely used in oriental stir-fries and as salad seasoning.

**Clover** (*Trifolium* species) - Sweet, anise-like, licorice. White and red clover blossoms were used in folk medicine against gout, rheumatism, and leucorrhea. It was also believed that the texture of fingernails and toenails would improve after drinking clover blossom tea. Native Americans used whole clover plants in salads, and made a white clover leaf tea for coughs and colds. Avoid bitter flowers that are turning brown, and choose those with the brightest color, which are tastiest. Raw flower heads can be difficult to digest.

**Cornflower** (*Centaurea cynaus*) - Also called Bachelor's button. They have a slightly sweet to spicy, clove-like flavor. Bloom is a natural food dye. More commonly used as garnish.

**Dame's Rocket** (*Hesperis matronalis*) - Also called Sweet Rocket or Dame's Violet. This plant is often mistaken for Phlox. Phlox has five petals, Dame's Rocket has just four. The flowers, which resemble phlox, are deep lavender, and sometimes pink to white. The plant is part of the mustard family, which also includes radishes, broccoli,

cabbage, cauliflower, and, mustard. The plant and flowers are edible, but fairly bitter. The flowers are attractive added to green salads. The young leaves can also be added to your salad greens (for culinary purposes, the leaves should be picked before the plant flowers). The seed can also be sprouted and added to salads. NOTE: It is not the same variety as the herb commonly called Rocket, which is used as a green in salads.

Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinalis*) - Member of the Daisy family. Flowers are sweetest when picked young. They have a sweet, honey-like flavor. Mature flowers are bitter. Dandelion buds are tastier than the flowers: best to pick these when they are very close to the ground, tightly bunched in the center, and about the size of a small gumball. Good raw or steamed. Also made into wine. Young leaves taste good steamed, or tossed in salads. When serving a rice dish use dandelion petals like confetti over the rice.

Day Lilies (*Hemerocallis* species) - Slightly sweet with a mild vegetable flavor, like sweet lettuce or melon. Their flavor is a combination of asparagus and zucchini. Chewable consistency. Some people think that different colored blossoms have different flavors. To use the surprisingly sweet petals in desserts, cut them away from the bitter white base of the flower. Also great to stuff like squash blossoms. Flowers look beautiful on composed salad platters or crowning a frosted cake. Sprinkle the large petals in a spring salad. In the spring, gather shoots two or three inches tall and use as a substitute for asparagus. NOTE: Many Lilies contain alkaloids and are NOT edible. Day Lilies may act as a diuretic or laxative; eat in moderation.

English Daisy (*Bellis perennis*) - The flowers have a mildly bitter taste and are most commonly used for their looks than their flavor. The petals are used as a garnish and in salads.

Fuchsia (*Fuchsia X hybrida*) - Blooms have a slightly acidic flavor. Explosive colors and graceful shape make it ideal as garnish. The berries are also edible.

Garden Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) - Sorrel flowers are tart, lemon tasting. So use like a lemon: on pizza, a salad topping, in sauces, over cucumber salads.

Gladiolus (*Gladiolus* spp) - Flowers (anthers removed) have a nondescript flavor (taste vaguely like lettuce) but make lovely receptacles for sweet or savory spreads or mousses. Toss individual petals in salads. It can also be cooked like a day lily.

Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) - Cranberry-like flavor with citrus overtones. Use slightly acidic petals sparingly in salads or as garnish. The flower can be dried to make an exotic tea.

Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) - Very bland tasting flavor.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) - Sweet honey flavor. Only the flowers are edible. NOTE: Berries are highly poisonous - Do not eat them!

Impatiens (*Impatiens wallerana*) - The flowers have a sweet flavor. They can be used as a garnish in salads or floated in drinks.

Johnny-Jump-Ups (*Viola tricolor*) - Lovely yellow, white and purple blooms have a mild wintergreen flavor and can be used in salads, to decorate cakes, or served with soft cheese. They are also a great addition to drinks, soups, desserts or salads.

Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) - The flavor of lilacs varies from plant to plant. Very fragrant, slightly bitter. Has a distinct lemony taste with floral, pungent overtones. Great in salads and crystallized with egg whites and sugar.

Linden (*Tilia* spp.) - Small flowers, white to yellow was are delightfully fragrant and have a honey-like flavor. The flowers have been used in a tea as a medicine in the past. NOTE: Frequent consumption of linden flower tea can cause heart damage.

Marigold (*Tagetes tenuifolia* - aka *T. signata*) - The marigold can be used as a substitute for saffron. Also great in salads as they have a citrus flavor.

Nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) - Comes in varieties ranging from trailing to upright and in brilliant sunset colors with peppery flavors. Nasturtiums rank among most common edible flowers. Blossoms have a sweet,spicy flavor similar to watercress. Stuff whole flowers with savory mousse. Leaves add peppery tang to salads. Pickled seed pods are less expensive substitute for capers. Use entire flowers to garnish platters, salads, cheese tortas, open-faced sandwiches, and savory appetizers.

Pansy (*Viola X wittrockiana*) - Pansies have a slightly sweet green or grassy flavor. If you eat only the petals, the flavor is extremely mild, but if you eat the whole flower, there is a winter, green overtone. Use them as garnishes, in fruit salads, green salad, desserts or in soups.

Peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*) - In China the fallen petals are parboiled and sweetened as a tea-time delicacy. Peony water was used for drinking in the middle ages. Add peony petals to your summer salad or try floating in punches and lemonades.

Phlox, Perrennial Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) - It is the perennial phlox, NOT the annual, that is edible. It is the high-growing (taller) and not the low-growing (creeping) phlox that grows from 3 to 4 feet tall. Slightly spicy taste. Great in fruit salads. The flowers vary from a Reddish purple to pink, some white.

Pineapple Guave (*Feijoa sellowians*) - The flavor is sweet and tropical, somewhat like a freshly picked ripe papaya or exotic melon still warm from the sun.

Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) - Also know as Cowslip. This flower is colorful with a sweet, but bland taste. Add to salads, pickle the flower buds, cook as a vegetable, or ferment into a wine.

Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) - Also known as Wild Carrot and Bishop's Lace. It is the original carrot, from which modern cultivars were developed, and it is edible with a light carrot flavor. The flowers are small and white, and bloom in a lacy, flat-topped cluster. Great in salads. NOTE: The problem is, it is closely related to, and looks almost exactly like another wild plant, Wild or Poison Hemlock, which often grows profusely in similar habitats, and is said to be the most poisonous plant native to the United States. The best way to differentiate between the two plants is to remember that Queen Anne's Lace has a hairy stem, while the stems of Wild Hemlock are smooth and hairless and hollow with purple spots.

Roses (*Rosa rugosa* or *R. gallica officinalis*) - Flavors depend on type, color, and soil conditions. Flavor reminiscent of strawberries and green apples. Sweet, with subtle undertones ranging from fruit to mint to spice. All roses are edible, with the flavor being more pronounced in the darker varieties. In miniature varieties can garnish ice cream and desserts, or larger petals can be sprinkled on desserts or salads. Freeze them in ice cubes and float them in punches also. Petals used in syrups, jellies, perfumed butters and sweet spreads. NOTE: Be sure to remove the bitter white portion of the petals.

Scented Geraniums (*Pelargonium* species) - The flower flavor generally corresponds to the variety. For example, a lemon-scented geranium would have lemon-scented flowers. They come in fragrances from citrus and spice to fruits and flowers, and usually in colors of pinks and pastels. Sprinkle them over desserts and in refreshing drinks or freeze in ice cubes. NOTE: Citronelle variety may not be edible.

Snap Dragon (*Antirrhinum majus*) - Delicate garden variety can be bland to bitter. Flavors depend on type, color, and soil conditions. Probably not the best flower to eat.

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) - The flower is best eaten in the bud stage when it tastes similar to artichokes. Once the flower opens, the petals may be used like chrysanthemums, the flavor is distinctly bittersweet. The unopened flower buds can also be steamed like artichokes.

Sweet Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) - Also known as Wild Baby's Breath. The flower flavor is sweet and grassy with a hint of nutty, vanilla flavor. NOTE: Can have a blood thinning effect if eaten in large amounts

Tulip Petals (*Tulipa*) - Flavor varies from tulip to tulip, but generally the petals taste like sweet lettuce, fresh baby peas, or a cucumber-like texture and flavor. NOTE: Some people have had strong allergic reactions to them. If touching them causes a rash, numbness etc. Don't eat them! Don't eat the bulbs ever. If you have any doubts, don't eat the flower.

Violets (*Viola* species) - Sweet, perfumed flavor. Related flowers, Johnny jump-ups or violas, and pansies now come in colorful purples and yellows to apricot and pastel hues. I like to eat the tender leaves and flowers in salads. I also use the flowers to beautifully embellish desserts and iced drinks. Freeze them in punches to delight children and adults alike. All of these flowers make pretty adornments for frosted cakes, sorbets, or any other desserts, and they may be crystallized as well. heart-shaped leaves are edible, and tasty when cooked like spinach.

Yucca Petals (*Yucca* species) - The white Yucca flower is crunchy with a mildly sweet taste (a hint of artichoke). in the spring, they can be used in salads and as a garnish.

## Herb Flowers:

Alliums (leeks, chives, garlic, garlic chives) - Known as the "Flowering Onions." There are approximately four hundred species that includes the familiar onion, garlic, chives, ramps, and shallots. All members of this genus are edible. Their flavors range from mild onions and leeks right through to strong onion and garlic. All parts of the plants are edible. The flowers tend to have a stronger flavor than the leaves and the young developing seed-heads are even stronger. We eat the leaves and flowers mainly in salads. The leaves can also be cooked as a flavoring with other vegetables in soups, etc.

Chive Blossoms (*Allium schoenoprasum*) - Use whenever a light onion flavor and aroma is desired. Separate the florets and enjoy the mild, onion flavor in a variety of dishes.

Garlic Blossoms (*Allium sativum*) - The flowers can be white or pink, and the stems are flat instead of round. The flavor has a garlicky zing that brings out the flavor of your favorite food. Milder than the garlic bulb. Wonderful in salads.

Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*) - Depending on the variety, flower range from pale lavender-blue to deep rose. It has a flavor similar to licorice. Angelica is valued culinary from the seeds and stems, which are candied and used in liqueurs, to the young leaves and shoots, which can be added to a green salad. Because of its celery-like flavor, Angelica has a natural affinity with fish. The leaves have a stronger, clean taste and make an interesting addition to salads. In its native northern Europe, even the mature leaves are used, particularly by the Laplanders, as a natural fish preservative.

Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) - Both flowers and leaves have a delicate anise or licorice flavor. Some people say the flavor reminds them of root beer. The blossoms make attractive plate garnishes and are often used in Chinese-style dishes. Excellent in salads.

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) - Depending on the type, the flowers are either bright white, pale pink, or a delicate lavender. The flavor of the flower is milder, but similar to the leaves of the same plant. Basil also has different varieties that have different milder flavors like lemon and mint. Sprinkle them over salad or pasta for a concentrated flavor and a spark of color that gives any dish a fresh, festive look.

Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) - Also called Wild Bergamot, Wild Oswego Tea, Horsemint, Monarda. Wild bee balm tastes like oregano and mint. The taste of bee balm is reminiscent of citrus with soft mingling of lemon and orange. The red flowers have a minty flavor. Any place you use oregano, you can use bee balm blossoms. The leaves and flower petals can also be used in both fruit and regular salads. The leaves taste like the main ingredient in Earl Gray Tea and can be used as a substitute.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) - Has lovely cornflower blue star-shaped flowers. Blossoms and leaves have a cool, faint cucumber taste. Wonderful in punches, lemonade, gin and tonics, sorbets, chilled soups, cheese tortas, and dips.

Burnet (*Sanquisorba minor*) - The taste usually is likened to that of cucumbers, and burnet can be used interchangeably with borage.

Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*) - Chervil flowers are delicate white flowers with an anise flavor. Chervil's flavor is lost very easily, either by drying the herb, or too much heat. That is why it should be added at the end of cooking or sprinkled on in its fresh, raw state in salads.

Cilantro/Coriander (*Coriander sativum*) - Like the leaves and seeds, the flowers have a strong herbal flavor. Use leaves and flowers raw as the flavor fades quickly when cooked. Sprinkle to taste on salads, bean dishes, and cold vegetable dishes.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) - It has a star-burst yellow flowers that have a mild anise flavor. Use with desserts or cold soups, or as a garnish with your entrees.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) - The white variety of ginger is very fragrant and has a gingery taste on the tongue. Petals may be eaten raw or you can cook the tender young shoots.

Jasmine (*Jasmine officinale*) - The flowers are intensely fragrant and are traditionally used for scenting tea. True Jasmine has oval, shiny leaves and tubular, waxy-white flowers. NOTE: The false Jasmine is in a completely different genus, "Gelsemium", and family, "Loganiaceae", is considered too poisonous for human consumption. This flower has a number of common names including yellow jessamine or jasmine, Carolina jasmine or jessamine, evening trumpetflower, gelsemium, and woodbine.

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) - Sweet, floral flavor, with lemon and citrus notes. Flowers look beautiful and taste good too in a glass of champagne, with chocolate cake, or as a garnish for sorbets or ice creams. Lavender lends itself to savory dishes also, from hearty stews to wine-reduced sauces. Diminutive blooms add a mysterious scent to custards, flans or sorbets.

Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*) - Tiny cream-colored citrus-scented blossoms. Leaves and flowers can be steeped as an herbtea, and used to flavor custards and flans.

Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) - Flowers are a milder version of plant's leaf. Use as you would the herb.

Mint (*Mentha* spp) - The flavor of the flowers are minty, but with different overtones depending on the variety. Mint flowers and leaves are great in Middle Eastern dishes.

Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) - Milder version of plant's leaf. Use as you would the herb.

Rosemary - Milder version of leaf. Fresh or dried herb and blossoms enhance flavor of Mediterranean dishes. Use with meats, seafoods, sorbets or dressings.

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) - The flowers are violet-blue, pink or white up to 1 3/8 inches long, small, tubelike, clustered together in whorls along the stem tops. Flowers have a subtler sage taste than the leaves and can be used in salads and as a garnish. Flowers are a delicious companion to many foods including beans, corn dishes, sauteed or stuffed mushrooms, or pesto sauce.

Savory (*Satureja hortensis*) - The flavor of the flowers is somewhat hot and peppery and similar to thyme.

Thyme (*Thymus* spp.) - Milder version of leaf. Use sprigs as garnish or remove flowers and sprinkle over soups, etc. Use thyme anywhere a herb might be used.)

## Vegetable Flowers:

Did you know that broccoli, cauliflower, and artichokes are all flowers? Also the spice saffron is the stamen from the crocus flower? Capers are unopened flower buds to a bush native in the Mediterranean and Asian nations. The general rule is that the flowers of most vegetables and herbs are safe to eat. Always check first, because as with anything in life, there will always be exceptions. NOTE: Avoid - the flowers of tomato, potato, eggplant, peppers and asparagus.

Arugula (*Eruca vesicaria*) - Also called garden rocket, roquette, rocket-salad, Oruga, Rocketsalad, rocket-gentle; Raukenkohl (German); rouquelle (French); rucola (Italian). An Italian green usually appreciated raw in salads or on sandwiches. The flowers are small, white with dark centers and can be used in the salad for a light piquant flavor. The flowers taste very similar to the leaves and range in color from white to yellowish with dark purple veins. Arugula resembles radish leaves in both appearance and taste. Leaves are compound and have a spicy, peppery flavor that starts mild in young leaves and intensifies as they mature.

Artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*) - The artichoke is considered a flower in which the leaves of the flower are eaten and the choke or thistle part is discarded.

Broccoli Florets (*Brassica oleracea*) - The top portion of broccoli is actually flower buds. As the flower buds mature, each will open into a bright yellow flower, which is why they are called florets. Small yellow flowers have a mild spiciness (mild broccoli flavor), and are delicious in salads or in a stir-fry or steamer.

Corn Shoots (*Zea mays*) - Corn shoots may be eaten when they resemble large blades of grass with a strong sweet corn flavor, which could be used as a garnish for a corn chowder. The whole baby corn in husk may also be eaten, silk and all.

Mustard (*Brassica* species) - Young leaves can be steamed, used as a herb, eaten raw, or cooked like spinach. NOTE: Some people are highly allergic to mustard. Start with a small amount. Eating in large amounts may cause red skin blotches

Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) - Also known as Ochro, Okoro, Quimgombo, Quingumbo, Ladies Fingers and Gumbo. It has hibiscus-like flowers and seed pods that, when picked tender, produce a delicious vegetable dish when stewed or fried. When cooked it resembles asparagus yet it may be left raw and served in a cold salad. The ripe seeds have been used as a substitute for coffee; the seed can be dried and powdered for storage and future use.

Pac Choy (*Brassica chinensis*) - A sister of the Broccoli plant.

Pea Blossoms (*Pisum* species) - Edible garden peas bloom mostly in white, but may have other pale coloring. The blossoms are slightly sweet and crunchy and they taste like peas. The shoots and vine tendrils are edible, with a delicate, pea-like flavor. Here again, remember that harvesting blooms will diminish your pea harvest, so you may want to plant extra. NOTE: Flowering ornamental sweet peas are poisonous - do not eat.

Radish Flowers (*Raphanus sativus*) - Depending on the variety, flowers may be pink, white or yellow, and will have a distinctive, spicy bite (has a radish flavor). Best used in salads. The Radish shoots with their bright red or white tender stalks are very tasty and are great sautéed or in salads.

Scarlet Runner Beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) - Have brilliant red blooms that are very tasty and can be served as a garnish for soups, in salads. Bean pods toughen as they age, so make use of young pods as well as flowers.

Squash Blossoms (*Curcubita pepo*) - Squash and pumpkin blossoms are edible and taste mildly of raw squash. Prepare the blossoms by washing and trimming the stems and remove the stamens. Squash blossoms are usually taken off the male plant, which only provides pollen for the female.

## Fruit Flowers:

Most fruit trees are usually sprayed just before and during the bloom. If you are using your own flowers that have not sprayed, use only the pedicels, not the pistils or stamens.

Apple Blossoms (*Malus species*) - Apple Blossoms have a delicate floral flavor and aroma. They are a nice accompaniment to fruit dishes and can easily be candied to use as a garnish. NOTE: Eat in moderation as the flowers may contain cyanide precursors. The seeds of the apple fruit and their wild relations are poisonous.

Banana Blossoms (*Musa paradisiaca*) - Also know as Banana Hearts. The flowers are a purple-maroon torpedo shaped growth appears out of the top of usually the largest of the trunks. Banana blossoms are used in Southeast Asian cuisines. The blossoms can be cooked or eaten raw. The tough covering is usually removed until you get to the almost white tender parts of the blossom. It should be sliced and let it sit in water until most of the sap are gone. If you eat it raw, make sure the blossom comes from a variety that isn't bitter. Most of the Southeast Asian varieties aren't bitter.

Citrus Blossoms (orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, kumquat) - Use highly scented waxy petals sparingly. Distilled orange flower water is characteristic of Middle Eastern pastries and beverages. Citrus flavor and lemony.

Elderberry Blossoms (*Sambucus spp*) - The blossoms are a creamy color and have a sweet scent and sweet taste. When harvesting elderberry flowers, do not wash them as that removes much of the fragrance and flavor. Instead check them carefully for insects. The fruit is used to make wine. The flowers, leaves, berries, bark and roots have all been used in traditional folk medicine for centuries. NOTE: All other parts of this plant, except the berries, are mildly toxic! They contain a bitter alkaloid and glycoside that may change into cyanide. The cooked ripe berries of the edible elders are harmless. Eating uncooked berries may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

*\* From What's Cooking America, [whatscookingamerica.net](http://whatscookingamerica.net)*