

Edible Flowers – some suggestions

Name of Plant	What bits can I eat?	What can I use it for?	How do I grow it?	Comments
<i>Helianthus annuus</i> Sunflower	Petals and seeds	Use petals uncooked in salads, or tossed into pasta and in stir fries. Seeds can be eaten raw or toasted. Shell them first.	A hardy annual that is easy to grow from seed. Sow in autumn or spring. Protect from slugs and snails.	Many varieties are available in various heights and colours. Multi-stemmed varieties offer the best value for money.
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i> Thyme	Flowers and leaves	Floral oils, floral butters (if cooked)	Easy to grow in poor soil and full sun. Good in containers. Sow seeds in spring or take cuttings in spring.	Lots of varieties. Try lemon thyme in butters as it is more delicate.
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> Chives	Use whole flowers or petals	Sprinkle onto salads and soups. Make herb butters	A perennial. Sow direct onto the growing site or into pots. Will grow in most conditions except deep shade and prefers a well-drained soil. Divide in spring.	Keep cutting the stems down to an inch above soil level to keep fresh growth coming throughout the growing season. Grow fresh plants after three years as they get tough and lose flavour.
<i>Origanum vulgare</i> Marjoram	Flowers and leaves	Make floral oils, butters and vinegars. Scatter over pizza.	Perennial. Grow in full sun except golden marjoram which prefers semi shade. Needs well-drained soil – preferably slightly alkaline. Grow from seed sown in autumn or divide in spring.	Self-seeds readily so pot up young plants.
<i>Mentha</i> Mint	The flowers and leaves. Remove flowers from stem or use whole florets in oils and for decoration.	Use in oils and vinegars and to make teas. Combines well with chocolate, strawberries and raspberries.	A hardy, vigorous perennial. Plant in moist soil or into a large container. Very robust. Propagate from cuttings or division in spring and autumn.	Can become invasive.
<i>Salvia officinalis</i> Sage	Flowers.	Use in oils, butters and vinegars. They are best eaten raw as they go brown when cooked.	Perennial. Good in containers. Full sun or semi-shade. Well-drained soil. Take cuttings in late summer.	

<p><i>Calendula officinalis</i> Pot Marigold English Marigold</p>	<p>The Petals</p>	<p>Sprinkle petals onto salads.</p> <p>Combine with thyme, chives or marjoram in herb butter</p>	<p>An annual. Sow seeds direct onto site or into pots.</p> <p>Prefers a sunny position and well-drained soil.</p> <p>Deadhead to prolong flowering</p>	<p>A useful plant to have in the veg garden – attracts pollinating insects. Also used for making healing creams and balms.</p>
<p><i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Fennel</p>	<p>All parts are edible. Pick newly opened flowers and remove from the main stalk.</p>	<p>Aniseed flavour – use in salads, oils, butters, sorbets, tea.</p>	<p>Perennial. Grows to over 6 feet. Divide in autumn or transplant seedlings in spring.</p>	<p>Bronze fennel can be used in the same way as the common form. Self-seeds readily and can become invasive.</p>
<p>Borage Starflower</p>	<p>The Petals</p>	<p>Sprinkle flower heads onto salads.</p> <p>Make ice cubes and use in summer punches – traditionally used in Pimms.</p> <p>Crystallise and decorate cakes.</p>	<p>An annual. Grow as for calendula above.</p>	<p>Starflower oil is used in the treatment of hormonal imbalance in women e.g. menopause.</p>
<p><i>Anchusa azurea</i> Anchusa</p>	<p>Flowers</p>	<p>Beautiful blue colour is attractive in salads and drinks. Can be crystallised.</p>	<p>Perennial. Likes sun and grows to 90cm. Cut back top growth after second flowering to promote strong growth for next year. Sow seeds in spring or autumn.</p>	
<p><i>Tropaeolum majus</i> Nasturtium</p>	<p>Petals, leaves, seeds</p>	<p>Use all parts in salads to add peppery 'zing' and colour.</p> <p>Pickle seeds. Add to omelette.</p>	<p>An annual. Grow as Calendula above – although tends to resent root disturbance and prefers poor soil. If you want more leaves grow in more fertile soil/potting compost.</p>	<p>Tends to be attacked by caterpillars and black fly so take care when harvesting! Young leaves are the most tasty and attractive.</p>
<p><i>Hemerocallis</i> Day Lily</p>	<p>Flowers</p>	<p>Buds and flowers are both crunchy with a lovely fresh flavour like mangetout.</p> <p>Use in salads and stir fries.</p>	<p>Clump forming perennial. Moist sunny site. Divide in spring. Dead-head frequently to prolong the flowering period.</p>	<p>Eat in moderation as they can have a laxative and diuretic effect.</p>

<i>Oenothera biennis</i> Evening Primrose	Buds and petals	Use in salads.	Prefers sunny, dry conditions. Self-seeds readily – invasive. Sow seed in spring indoors. Plant out after danger of frost has passed.	Seeds are used to make evening primrose oil which is high in essential fatty acids.
<i>Lavendula angustifolia</i> Lavender	Flowerheads	Use fresh or dried flowers in cakes and biscuits, ice cream, butter creams, floral oils and sugars. Use a light sunflower oil to make oils with.	A sub-shrub. Prefers free draining, poor soil in full sun. Hates sitting in cold damp soil. Trim in autumn and again in spring .	Use sparingly as flavour is very strong and can be overpowering. Dried lavender flowers can be used to make bath sachets, drawer fresheners, Herb pillows etc.
<i>Viola odorata</i> Sweet violet Violet/viola	Petals	Crystallise to decorate cakes. Add to butter creams, floral sugars. Make ice cubes to add to punches and cordials.	Odorata flowers in spring and is sweeter than the viola that flowers later and is larger. Sow seeds in spring, divide in autumn or spring.	Main attraction is their pretty 'faces'. Look lovely as decorations on cakes and in drinks.
<i>Rosa</i> Rose	The Petals	Similar uses to violets. Use floral sugar to make meringues and biscuits.	A hardy shrub. Grow in good sunlight/dappled shade in fertile, moist but not too wet soil. Dead head to prolong flowering. Remove diseased leaves throughout growing season and also from around base of plant.	Cut away the thick creamy base of the petal before using.
<i>Pelargonium</i> Scented Geranium	Leaves have most flavour	Use in baking to make sugars, meringues, cakes and roulades. Use flowers for decoration	Tender plant best grown indoors. Good in containers. Take cuttings in spring and autumn from stems that have not flowered.	There are many varieties with differing fragrances. Choose the ones you like best.