

Edible Flowers!

Edible flowers can add color and taste to salads and can be used in main dishes, as well. Which flowers are really good to eat, especially if they are added to a salad, where everything is fresh? When using flowers, make sure that none of them have been sprayed with pesticides.

My favorite flower for salads is the rose. I dip the roses in a bowl of water and hold them down for a couple of minutes. This will chase away any bug that might have been hiding within. Then I remove the petals and place them on a paper towel to dry. Use this method with most any flower with double petals. Rose petals are an elegant addition to a salad.

Pansies are available from a fall garden, late October - March. Purchase them in single or double varieties. They will constantly produce if you cut them. Need a bit extra? They are usually for sale in the grocery stores. They have a mild wintergreen flavor. For special teas or punch, float them on top.

Nasturtiums come in bright orange, yellow, and red colors. With a sweet fragrance and a peppery taste, you use them in vinegar, with white wine vinegar. Let it sit in the dark (light fades colors) for several weeks. Strain flowers out and pour vinegar in a clean glass bottle. Great in salad dressing.

Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), also known as Spanish Tarragon is a great small gold colored flower good in a salad or in a vinegar. Mexican Mint Marigold blooms almost year round in our area, shutting down in only the coldest months. This plant looks great as a border in front of a flower bed.

Begonia is another lovely flower for fresh consumption. The texture is a bit crunchy with a mild cucumber-like flavor. Begonias do best here if they get some afternoon shade in the summer.

Squash blossoms have a mild vegetable flavor and are edible from all varieties. If you planted too many zucchini, collecting the flowers is a great method of controlling the harvest. They can be stuffed with breadcrumbs or ricotta cheese and sautéed. I like to add chopped green onion and crab meat to mine.

“Lemon Gem” and “Tangerine Gem” variety marigolds, *Tagetes tenuifolia*, are the main edible marigold. They have a citrusy-tarragon flavor, but lack fragrance. Pull the petals off of the flower. You will also find most of the herb flowers to be tasty additions to a dip, salad, cottage cheese, potato salad, or pasta salad. Pick all of the flowers at their best and enjoy your edible landscape.

Come see us at the Farmer’s Market in North San Juan Park today, 9:00 to noon, on the Nolana Loop, just east of Raul Longoria, behind the Hidalgo County Community Center. We have fresh sweet corn, several variety of beans and peas, squash blossoms, and tomato, onions, a large variety of herbs and more.

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