

Edible Flowers

When discussing wild edible plants we often overlook their flowers. This is unfortunate since edible flowers can be a very valuable survival food source.

The flowers of edible plants are frequently abundant and easy to identify. Since many edible flowers are also brightly colored, they can be easy to spot even at a distance.

With a little knowledge on edible flower species, the survivor can graze while on the move or gather flowers for later use as a good nutritious salad or stir fry in camp.

Of course, not every type of flower is edible. There are indeed poisonous flowers (for example, I wouldn't choose to eat poison ivy flowers) while others just plain taste bad. Before you eat any flower, be absolutely sure of it's species and edibility.

It is wise to do a taste test before gathering a large amount of any kind of flower for eating. Some flower species may not appeal to you. Often flowers can vary in taste from plant to plant and some portions of flowers may taste bitter or have some other disagreeable attribute.



Edible Lilac Flowers

In the spring you can gather large amounts of edible lilac flowers.

The common lilac often has huge numbers beautiful flowers. If you pluck an individual floret and squeeze its base, you can often obtain a small amount of nectar. This sweet nectar is what attracts humming birds and is a valuable addition to your survival food energy stores.

Lilacs are good eaten plain, in salads, and in stir fries. Another natural Meal Ready to Eat.

When in doubt do not eat it applies to any plant. In most survival situations food is not a totally critical element. You can survive many days, even months, with inadequate or no food supplies.

Below is a list of edible flowers you may come across while in a survival situation as well as some information on each particular flower listed.

Common name	Scientific name	Flavor	Color	Comments
Anise hyssop	Agastache foeniculum	Anise	Lilac	Self seeding perennial
Apple	Malus spp.	Floral	White to pink	Eat in moderation since flowers contain cyanide precursors
Arugula	Eruca vesicaria sativa	Spicy	White	Annual; once flowers form the leaves become bitter
Basil	Ocimum	Herbal	White,	Annual

	basilicum		lavender	
Bachelor's button	Centaurea cyanus	Vegetal	White, pink, blue	Annual; petals are edible; the calyx is bitter
Bee balm	Monarda didyma	Minty, sweet, hot	Wide range	Perennial
Borage	Borago officinalis	Herbal	Blue	Annual; use with nasturtium; uses sparingly -- diuretic effects
Broccoli	Brassica officinalis	Spicy	Green	Annual
Calendula	Calendula officinalis	Slightly bitter	Yellow, orange	Annual; most often used for color rather than flavor
Chamomile	Chamaemelum nobile	Sweet apple	White	Perennial; drink tea in moderation -- contains thujone; ragweed sufferers may be allergic to chamomile
Chervil	Anthriscus cerefolium	Herbal	White	Annual
Chicory	Cichorium intybus	Herbal	Blue	Perennial
Chives	Allium schoenoprasum	Onion	Lavender-pink	Perennial; avoid eating whole flower; taste can be overwhelming
Chrysanthemum	Chrysanthemum spp.	Strong	Perennial	Use the florets; strong flavor
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale	Sweet, honey-like	Yellow	Perennial; use young flowers, mature flowers become bitter; flowers close after picking
Daylily	Hemerocallis spp.	Vegetal, sweet	Wide range	Perennial; may act as a diuretic or laxative; eat in moderation
Dianthus	Dianthus spp.	Sweet clove flavor	Wide range	Perennial; remove the narrow base of the petals (bitter)
Dill	Anethum graveolens	Herbal	Yellowish-green	Annual
Elderberry	Sambucus canadensis	Sweet	White	Perennial; do not wash flowers since it removes much of the flavor
English daisy	Bellis perennis	Mildly bitter	Pink	Perennial; ray flowers have a mildly bitter taste
Fennel	Foeniculum vulgare	Mildly anise	Yellow-green	Normally grown as an annual
Hibiscus	Hibiscus rosa-sinensis	Mildly citrus	Rose, red	Showy edible garnish
Hollyhock	Althea rosea	Vegetal	White, pink, red	Showy edible garnish
Honeysuckle	Lonicera japonica	Sweet	White to pale yellow	Perennial; do not use other honeysuckle flowers
Johnny-jump-up	Viola tricolor	Wintergreen	Purple and yellow	Annual; the petals have little flavor unless the green sepals are included; contain saponins and may be toxic in large amounts
Lavender	Lavendula spp.	Sweet, perfumed flavor	Lavender	Perennial; use sparingly due to intense flavor; lavender oil may be poisonous

Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Varies	Lavender	Wide variation in flavor -- from no flavor to green and herbaceous to lilac
Linden	<i>Tilia</i> spp.	Honey-like	White	Frequent consumption of linden flower tea can cause heart damage
Lovage	<i>Levisticum officinale</i>	Celery	White	Perennial
Marigold	<i>Tagetes patula</i>	Bitter	Yellow, orange	Annual; Lemon Gem and Tangerine Gem have the best flavor
Mint	<i>Mentha</i> spp.	Minty	Purple	Perennial; each type of mint has its own unique flavor
Nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Spicy, peppery	Wide range	Annual
Okra	<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i>	Vegetal	Yellow	Annual
Pansy	<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>	Vegetal	Wide range	Annual; has a slightly sweet green or grassy flavor; petals have a mild flavor; whole flower has a wintergreen flavor
Passion flower	<i>Passiflora</i> spp.	Vegetal	Purple	Vine; showy flowers best used as a garnish
Pineapple sage	<i>Salvia elegans</i>	Sweet, fruity	Red	Perennial; flavor has a hint of mint and spice
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Sweet	Red	Annual; raw clover flowers are not easily digestible
Rose	<i>Rosa</i> spp.	Perfumed	Wide range	Perennial: remove the white, bitter base of the petal
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Herbal	Blue	Perennial
Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Herbal	Purple-blue	Perennial
Scarlet runner bean	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Vegetal	Purple	Annual; flower only last one to two days
Scented geraniums	<i>Pelargonium</i> spp.	Varies	Wide range	Perennial; the flavor is usually similar to the scent of the leaves
Signet marigold	<i>Tagetes signata</i>	Spicy, herbal	Yellow	Annual; may be harmful if eaten in large amounts; other marigolds are edible but have a tinge to bitter flavor
Snapdragon	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	Bitter	Wide range	Annual; use as a garnish
Squash	<i>Curcubita pepo</i>	Vegetal	Yellow	Annual
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Varies	Yellow	Annual; flower is best eaten in bud stage when it has an artichoke flavor; petals of open flowers have a bitter-sweet flavor; pollen can cause a reaction for some people
Sweet woodruff	<i>Galium odoratum</i>	Sweet, nutty, vanilla	White	Can have a blood thinning effect if eaten in large amounts
Thyme	<i>Thymus</i> spp.	Herbal	White	Perennial herb
Tulip	<i>Tulipa</i> spp.	Vegetal	Wide range	Bulb; good stuffed
Violet	<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet, perfumed	Purple, white	Perennial; use candied or fresh

Additional edible flowers include

- Black locust *Robinia pseudoacacia*
- Cattails, *Typha* spp.
- Clary sage, *Salvia sclarea*
- Common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*
- Coriander, *Coriander sarivum*
- Fuchsia, *Fushia x hybrida*
- Gardenia, *Gardenia jasminoides*
- Garlic, *Allium sativum*
- Garlic chives, *Allium tuberosum*
- Gladiolus, *Gladiolus hortulanus*
- Hyssop, *Hyssopus officalis*
- Leek, *Allium porrum*
- Lemon, *Citrus limon*
- Marjoram, *Origanum vulgare*
- Marsh mallow, *Althaea officinalis*
- Mustard, *Brassica* spp.
- Nodding onion, *Allium cernuum*
- Peony, *Paeonia lactiflora*
- Orange, *Citrus sinensis*
- Oregano, *Origanum vulgar*
- Pineapple guava, *Acca sellowiana*
- Plum, *Prunus* spp.
- Radish, *Raphanus sativus*
- Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*
- Rose of Sharon, *Hibiscus syriacus*
- Safflower, *Carthamus tinctorius*
- Spiderwort, *Tradescantia virginia*
- Strawberry, *Fragaria ananassa*
- Water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*
- Water lily, *Nymphaea odorata*
- Winter savory, *Satureja montana*
- Yucca, *Yucca*

Edible Clover Flowers



Clover is an excellent survival food due to its widespread abundance and easy gathering.

You can eat the clover leaves raw or cooked. Clover flowers are edible as well as clover seeds, and roots. As with most wild edibles, the younger the plant the better its foliage for survival food.

Clover leaves have the following nutritional values:

- **81% water**
- **4% protein**
- **0.7% fat**

Clover seeds can also be sprouted and used as a salad. This may substantially increase vitamin B content.