

## Roses (*Rosa species*)



Flower size, fragrance, and flavor vary among the many rose species and varieties. Generally the flowers of the older types, such as rugosa roses, are the most flavorful. Roses need full sun and a rich, well-drained soil.

They usually require regular watering, fertilizing, and pruning. Roses have a perfumed taste. Pick off the petals and remove the whitish, bitter base. Add to salads or make jelly.

### Safety Reminder

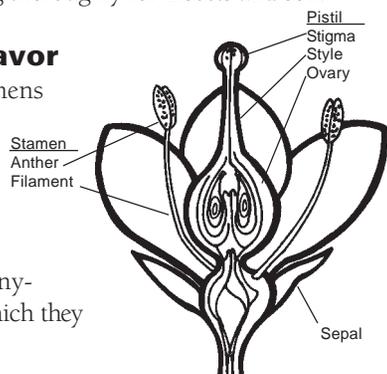
Be careful not to pick flowers exposed to pesticides or those growing by the roadside. Also, be cautious if you have hay fever, asthma, or allergies.

### From Garden to Kitchen

Harvest flowers in the morning after the dew has evaporated. Choose flowers at their peak for best flavor. After picking, put long-stemmed flowers in water and keep in a cool place. Use short-stemmed blossoms within a few hours of harvest or store between layers of damp paper toweling or in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Just before using, gently wash flowers, checking thoroughly for insects and soil.

### For Best Flavor

Remove the stamens and pistils from flowers. Also remove the sepals (except on pansies, violas, and Johnny-jump-ups, in which they add to the flavor).



### To Dry Edible Flowers

Some flowers dry well, while others lose their flavor during drying. Check by drying a few samples before drying a whole crop. Gather flowers in early morning before the sun shines on them. Hang upside down by the stems in a dark, well-ventilated area. (If picked separately, place on a fine screen.) Once dry, label and store in an air-tight container in a cool, dark place.

## Violets (*Viola odorata*)

## Johnny-jump-ups (*Viola tricolor*)

## Pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*)



These three low-growing violas grow in sun or shade in fertile, moist, well-drained soil. They bloom best in cool weather. Violets are hardy perennials

that can be divided and moved around the garden. Johnny-jump-ups and pansies are annuals. They are typically purchased as transplants in garden centers and planted in the garden in early spring. Johnny-jump-ups often reseed. Violas have a sweet, wintergreen or perfumed flavor. Use petals to color butter. Float flowers in punch, use in fruit salads, or candy for decorating cakes and pies.

### For more information

Horticultural information on selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality is available from your local Iowa State University Extension office and from these Web sites.

ISU Extension Publications—  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs)

ISU Horticulture—  
[www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu)

Reiman Gardens—  
[www.reimangardens.iastate.edu](http://www.reimangardens.iastate.edu)

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# Edible Flowers



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University Extension

The ancient Romans cultivated roses, violets, and borage for culinary use. Today, edible flowers are a popular way to add color, texture, scent, and flavor to foods. Following is a list of some edible flowers, their culture, and suggested uses.

### **Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)**



The uniquely shaped, scarlet or pink flowers add color and interest to flower beds, foods, and beverages. Blooms appear in July and August on plants that are 2- to 4-feet in height. Bee balm thrives in a variety of light and soil conditions, but prefers a sunny location with rich, moist soil. Leave 2 feet between plants because bee balm spreads rapidly. Remove spent flowers to extend the bloom period. Bee balm flowers have a citrus, minty flavor. Use in salads, as garnishes, or more traditionally, to make bee balm tea. Use 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flowers (or 1 tablespoon dried flowers) for 4 cups water, steep for 5 to 10 minutes, strain, and serve.

### **Borage (*Borago officinalis*)**



This 2- to 3-foot annual has blue, star-shaped flowers in midsummer. Sow seeds in spring in a sunny location. The soil should be light, rich, and well-aerated. After germination, thin the seedlings so the plants are 2 feet apart. Borage easily reseeds itself once established. Borage can be grown indoors in a south window with plenty of moisture and ample root space. Borage flowers have a crisp, cucumber flavor. Use in salads or as garnishes. Float in drinks or freeze in ice cubes. Use candied flowers to decorate cakes, pastries, and desserts. Borage does not dry well. If eaten in large quantities, borage can have a diuretic effect.

### **Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**



Also known as pot marigold, this annual produces pale yellow to deep orange flowers atop erect, 18-inch stems. Plants bloom from late spring to midsummer, then decline in hot weather. Sow seed in early spring in full sun and well-drained

soil; repeat in early July for a fall harvest. Thin plants to 12 inches apart. Calendula flowers have a slightly bitter flavor and are valued mostly for their color. Use petals in salads, soups, butter, rice, stews, poultry, or in tea (use same proportions as for bee balm). It is sometimes used as a saffron substitute. Dry individual petals on paper (petals shouldn't touch each other); store in a moisture-tight container.

### **Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)**



Finely-cut foliage and daisy-like flowers describe this 2- to 3-foot annual. Its sweet, apple fragrance and taste make chamomile popular as a tea. Chamomile can grow in full sun to partial shade and prefers a sandy, well-drained soil. It blooms from late spring through late summer. Sow seed in spring. Once established, it will reseed itself. To make chamomile tea, harvest the flowers when the petals begin to droop. Add 1 cup boiling water for each 3 to 4 teaspoons fresh flowers (1 to 2 teaspoons dried flowers). Cover and steep for 3 minutes, strain, and serve. (Individuals who are sensitive to ragweed should use caution when drinking this tea.)

### **Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*)**



Lavender-pink flowers first appear on this perennial in June. Regular picking encourages repeat blooms. Harvest flowers when they are just beginning to open. Chives can grow in full sun to part shade. They prefer a moist, well-drained soil and may attain a height of 18 inches. Chive flowers have a mild onion flavor. Break apart the florets and add to salads, cooked vegetables, casseroles, cheese dishes, eggs, potatoes, or cream cheese. Chive flowers do not dry well.

### **Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* species)**



These easy-to-grow perennials vary in height from 10 to 24 inches and bloom throughout the summer in shades of yellow, orange, red, and pink. Plant in sun or part shade. Daylilies will tolerate many soil types but prefer a slightly acid, well-drained soil. Divide clumps every three or four years. Daylily blossoms

have a sweet flavor, especially the pale yellows and oranges. Use in salads or as garnishes. Float in punch bowls for decoration, or stuff with soft cheeses for an appetizer. Dried daylily petals are an important ingredient in Chinese sweet and sour soup.

### **Impatiens (*Impatiens wallerana*)**



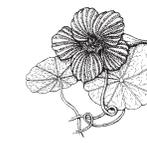
These long-blooming annuals have glossy foliage and are available in a variety of colors, bicolors, and double blooms. Impatiens grow in shade to part sun in a moist, organic soil. Indoors, place plants in a sunny window or under artificial lighting. The flowers have a sweet flavor and can be used as a garnish, in salads, or floated in drinks.

### **Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)**



This common shrub grows to 15 feet in height and puts on a colorful, fragrant display in early spring. Lilacs perform best in well-drained soils in full sun. Remove spent flowers to encourage heavy bloom the following spring. Some lilacs have a perfumed, floral taste that lends itself to many uses. Try it with vanilla yogurt or candied as a cake or pie decoration.

### **Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)**



This 12-inch-tall annual has richly colored red, orange, and yellow flowers from midsummer until the first frost. The leaves have a distinctive round shape. Sow seed 1/2 inch deep in early spring. Plants produce the most flowers in full sun. Avoid fertilization. Plants in highly fertile soils produce lush foliage but few flowers. If growing nasturtiums indoors in a south window, fertilize with half-strength houseplant fertilizer once a month, water sparingly, and use a coarse, porous potting mix. Nasturtium flowers have a peppery, zesty taste that can substitute for mustard in sandwiches. Add to salads or cure in vinegar. They make an attractive garnish on a plate, or add color when petals are added to butter.