



Garden Scoop

Edible Flowers

BY K.S. Kennen

Many gardeners make dual use of their landscape by intermingling edible plants with ornamentals, such as planting blueberry bushes instead of viburnum. Both look attractive in the landscape but one can provide an edible crop. One category the gardeners with edible landscapes may overlook is flowers. Evidence of people eating flowers exists since records have been kept. Ancient Greeks and Romans had calendulas both in their ceremonial rituals and diets.



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If you are thinking of adding edible flowers to your landscape, first consider safety. When buying from a big box store or nursery, you may not know if the flowers can be eaten because the grower may have used herbicides or pesticides on or near the plants. The way to be sure is to start your flowers from seed. Using a seed starting medium or your own starter mix along with small seed starter pots or even seed trays is something you could try. Just be sure to allow enough time to grow your plants to the correct size to transplant in your landscape.

The next thing to consider is what uses your flowers will have as edibles. One area the floral edibles are used in is for flavor. To add a cucumber flavor to salads, lemonade, or a gin and tonic try growing borage with the beautiful blue flowers. This reseeding, annual herb not only has edible flowers but the leaves can be eaten raw or sauteed and added to salads, fish, or poultry dishes. Plant the seeds after danger of frost has passed. Enriched, middle pH, and well-drained soil in a morning sun location is the best place to start and grow your borage. A great side effect is the pollinator attracting flowers that make this edible plant perfect in a butterfly garden.

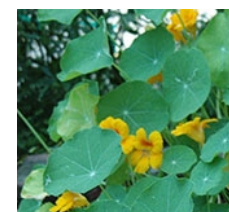


Wikipedia

For a grassy, mint flavor try using the pansy or smaller version, viola, with a single color or multi-colors. This annual can not only be added to salads but also some desserts. This cool loving plant does well in an enriched soil with plenty of sun. Have patience since the seeds can take 10 to 12 days to germinate. This compact plant would look great in containers or as a border plant.



Want to add a peppery, spicy, green taste to your salad? Try adding some nasturtium flowers to the salad. Nasturtiums are an easy to grow flower with not only an edible flower but also the leaves and seed pods. Besides slicing and adding to salads, you can put them on a sandwich in place of mustard. Grow the annual from seeds in spring and fall. Be sure to grow in a morning, sunny location with well-drained soil.



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Lake County MGVS Mission Statement

The mission of UF/IFAS Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers is to assist extension agents by providing horticultural education programs and current research-based information to the public through plant clinics, community outreach and Discovery Gardens.

For more information contact: UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County Office lakemg.ifas@ufl.edu •

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The Foundation for The Gator Nation

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Edible Flowers, continued

BY Karen Kennen, MGV

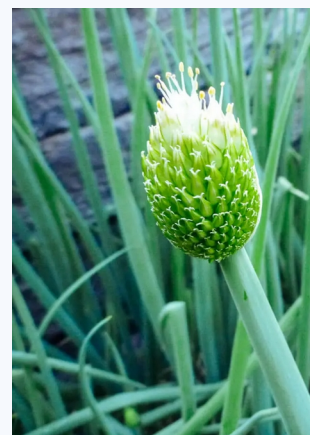
Other edible blooms to consider are those found in the allium family. Three edibles in this family are garlic, onions, and chives. All three have flowers that are edible. The flowers can add a mild, onion flavor to soups, salads, omelets, and pizza. The blooms consist of clusters of small florets. Garlic and onion have



UF/IFAS CHIVE BLOOM



UF/IFAS GARLIC BLOOM



Garden betty.com ONION BLOOM

a bulb that is edible along with the leaves of the onion plant and stalks of the chive plant. Chives are a perennial that can be started from seeds or sets in August through March and will grow in almost any soil. Onions can also be started from seeds or sets in September through December. They will be ready to harvest in five to six months with regular irrigation and fertilizer. Garlic does not start from seeds or sets but from dividing the bulb into small bulbs. It can be planted from late fall to early winter.

Another edible flower I was surprised could be eaten is the rose. One thing to be sure to do with any rose petal is to remove the lower white part of the petal since it often has an unpleasant flavor. The flavor is dependent upon three factors: petal color, type of rose, and soil condition. Flavors can range from minty to fruity. One interesting recipe is to re-hydrate dried rose petals in honey water and place in single layers on thinly sliced bread to make into sandwiches for an afternoon tea. There is also rose petal jam, rose petal scones, and even rose petal tea.

Probably the most noticeable usage of flower blossoms is when they are used as a garnish. For a while using real flowers as garnishment had gone out of fashion but it seems to have reappeared to give panache and color to edibles as decor as well as adding color. One favorite flower to place on frosted baked goods are Johnny jump-ups (viola tricolor), a colorful small flower that looks like a miniature pansy. I have grown this small annual from seed in cool weather since it can not survive in the heat. Be sure to keep it moist and even growing it all day in dappled shade will work.



Imgur.com



<https://lifebeautifulmagazine.com/>

One food that can easily be elevated in flavor is cheese. Whenever shaping a cheese log (maybe with goat cheese) add a garnishment of different blooms for different flavors. The goat cheese disc on the left has read dianthus blooms that add a clove and nutmeg flavor. You can also add the star shaped bloom from borage to add beauty and a flavor of cucumber to the cheese.



One thing to remember if you plan to experiment and add new flavor and color to your cooking, it is best to start with something you know has no pesticides or herbicides. That would be something that you have grown in your own garden.

Plant Clinic Clatter

Dear Master Gardener,

My vine-ripe tomatoes are actually sprouting plants from the fruit!!!

It looks like a potato with eyes. What's going on?!?!



DEAR HOMEOWNER,

Wow! You're right, it does look like a potomato! We were stumped, so we contacted UF/IFAS tomato expert, [Bob Hochmuth](#).

It is known as vivipary. This link below does a good job describing it. It is not really that uncommon, but rare enough that it is not well known. When seeds germinate inside of the tomato, vivipary can occur if the tomato is overripe and its hormone (ABA) is lessened. With this lessening of the hormone, the seed slowly becomes active and will begin to sprout. Besides being too ripe, storage of the tomato below 55 degrees for too long, potassium deficiency, and too much nitrogen during cultivation can cause vivipary.

<https://hoke.ces.ncsu.edu/2018/07/why-are-tomato-seeds-sprouting-inside-of-my-tomato/>

tomato [publications](#) | [Cultivars](#) | [Diseases](#) |



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Garden of the Month

The garden of the month is the vegetable garden.

Keith Moore and Kelli Varon are leads for this garden. The leads have instituted practices to go toward natural growing practices by growing "chop and drop" crops such as sun hemp to grow and work back into the soil. They have also begun a program to have "land raised" seed by allowing crops to go to seed so the seed can be used in the next planting with the hopes that by having land raised seeds the plants will be naturalized to this area.



Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Clinic

Bring your plant, insects, and soil problems to our Plant Clinic for advice Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The plant clinic is staffed by volunteers. Please call ahead at 352-343-4101 to be sure that someone is in the clinic to assist you with your question. You may also send photos of your local problems to Jamielyn Daugherty at jdaugherty@ufl.edu or to the plant clinic at lakemg@ifas.ufl.edu.

What's Cooking?

Swiss Chard

BY Lori Johnson
Family & Consumer Science Agent

Did you know: Swiss chard is high in Vitamin A, Vitamin C and Vitamin K. It is also a good source of magnesium, copper, and manganese. Vitamin A helps our body form red blood cells, skin, and bones. It also provides immunity along with Vitamin C. Green vegetables like Swiss chard and others provide Vitamin K that help our bodies in blood clotting. Magnesium helps regulate our blood pressure and blood sugar, assisting our muscles to contract and nervous system to function. Copper also helps our nervous system function and provides energy while manganese helps wound healing and carbohydrate and protein metabolism.

Swiss chard can be scrambled in your morning eggs, stirred into your favorite soup, or layered into your favorite pasta dish. Swap out spinach for Swiss chard in your quiche or mix up your stir fry by adding this green for a boost of nutrition.

Swiss Chard & Pan Roasted Tomatoes with Chickpeas

Recipe adapted from Real Simple

Ingredients:

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise or any other tomato
- 1 small bunch Swiss chard, thick stems and ribs removed and leaves torn (about 8 cups)
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- Salt and pepper
- 1 15-oz can chickpeas, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice



Directions:

1. Cook the rice according to the package.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Add the tomatoes (cut side down) and cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until browned and starting to soften, about 3-5 minutes. Flip over and cook an additional minute. Place tomatoes on a plate.
4. Reduce heat to medium and add the Swiss chard, raisins, garlic, 2 tablespoons water, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper to the skillet.
5. Cook, tossing, until the chard wilts, about 2-3 minutes.
6. Return the tomatoes to the skillet, add the chickpeas and lemon juice, and toss until heated through, about 1-2 minutes.
7. Serve over rice.

Gingers

By Reggie Daugherty

The Zingiberaceae family of plants, mostly tropical perennials originating in Southern and Southeast Asia, add unique beauty and help prevent soil erosion because of their clumping-style of growth. This herbaceous perennial will spread and emerge from rhizomes, the thick fleshy root-like structures you are accustomed to seeing in the produce section of the market. They are aggressive growers from four to five feet tall, so you only need to start with two or three plants. When you need to thin them out (which is every couple of years) share them with others or use the rhizome of the true ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) for cooking or medicinal needs. They grow best in filtered sun to part shade with rich, moist, well-draining soil. The leaves are usually lance-shaped or oblong, deep green, and glossy. Flowers vary greatly from one genus to another and may be borne throughout the growing season in tropical climates.



True, *Zingiber officinale*
Yellow-green w/purple tips
Aug-Sept



Butterfly, *Hedychium*
White, pink, orange, red
Late spring thru early fall



Pinecone, *Zingiber zirumbet*
Red cone
Autumn



Peacock Ginger, *Kaempferia pulchra*
Pink, lavender, and white flowers
June-August



Crepe ginger, over which there's considerable disagreement on its true botanical name: *Cheilocostus speciosus*, *Hellenia speciosus*, *Costus speciosus*? Photo by Shaun Winterton, Aquarium and Pond Plants of the World, Edition 3, USDAAPHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org (He calls it *Hellenia speciosus*, incidentally.)



Blue Ginger, *Dichorisandra thyrsiflora*
Blue
Late summer thru fall
Not a ginger plant, just resembles one

Treemendous: Edible Tree Flowers

Jamie Daugherty, RHA

Edible flowers are often associated with herbaceous plants or shrubs, but there are several trees with edible flowers. Two of particular interest are all citrus varieties and pineapple guava.

The beauty of the edible citrus flower is that you can harvest from any citrus plant. Don't worry about losing out on a fruit harvest, reducing the number of flowers on the tree can lead to larger fruit. There are a few things to remember when growing citrus in the home landscape. There are a few diseases that can impact these plants. The most common at the moment is citrus greening. One way to keep your plant healthy before and after infection is to fertilize regularly with a slow-release fertilizer. The constant availability of nutrients helps to keep the plant healthy, though it does not stop the disease. If you can find the 'sugar bell' orange tree variety, this is the least impacted by citrus greening. It is a relatively new variety and not yet widely available. If you see anything of concern regarding your citrus plant, contact our office for assistance.



Citrus Flowers by UF/IFAS



Pineapple guava flowers by UF/IFAS

Pineapple guava, also known as feijoa, is a wonderful small tree/large shrub to add to a home landscape. The fleshy flower petals of this plant offer a sweet treat to those adventurous enough to give it a try. Add them to the dish of your choice or eat them right off the plant. This plant can be pruned into a small tree or hedged into a large shrub. Flowers bloom from April-May. Leave some flowers for the fruit to form between August and October. The fruit is also edible. Look for the 'Coolidge' variety of this plant as it does well in Florida. Plant in

full sun to part shade. Test your soil before planting to ensure the plant will grow in that location. While you can plant from seed, the fruit may not be high quality and it will take many years before you see flowers or fruit. Come see out specimen plants in the Waterwise section of our Discovery Garden.

UF/IFAS Extension Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers present the Spring Master Gardener Volunteer Plant Sale

April 30, 2022, 8am-Noon

Discovery Gardens at UF/IFAS Extension, Lake County
1951 Woodlea Rd, Tavares

UF/IFAS Extension Lake County Master Gardener Volunteers will be offering over 3,000 plants for sale to the public including Florida native species, butterfly and hummingbird attractants, edible plants, and many more.

All proceeds from the sale go to support Discovery Gardens and educational programs.



Cash, Check or Credit Cards accepted.

Checks must be payable to the: University of Florida –driver's license required for check payments.

Mobile Plant Clinic (staffed with Master Gardener Volunteers) & UF/IFAS Bookstore Will Be On –Site

Bring a Cart or Wagon or Use One of Ours*

*Limited Supply

For more information contact: Jamie Daugherty at jdaugherty@ufl.edu or JuWanda Rowell at juwanda.rowell@ufl.edu

Classes and Events

4/16: Saturday in the Gardens: Dish Garden Make and Take.

10 am – 1 pm Auditorium

1951 Woodlea Rd. Tavares

Cost \$15 per person

Presenter: Diane Vanetta, MGV, hands-on workshop to create your own dish garden to take home!

Register: <http://lakediscoverygardensprograms.eventbrite.com/>.

4/28: Indoor Gardening Presented by a UF Master Gardener Volunteer

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Registration is open

Leesburg Public Library Meeting Room A&B

Do you want to have plants but don't have a yard? Come to this Indoor Gardening class presented by UF Master Gardeners to learn all about taking care of plants indoors.

Discovery Gardens

Please plan a visit to over twenty different gardens located at 1951 Woodlea Road in Tavares. The hours are Monday through Friday and the third Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Just like your yard, Discovery Garden changes with the seasons and will reveal something new with each visit. The spring plants are beginning to bloom.



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