

Though dozens of edible flowers are available to grow in the Northwoods, I've found the following fifteen to be the most dependable in our short growing season and tough winters. In some cases, these plants will also enhance your other flower and vegetable choices, since they attract pollinators.

Here, then, is my Top 15 List, divided according to "seasonal" appearance:

LATE SPRING:

tulips
lilacs*
dandelion
pansy/johnny-jump-up
violets

EARLY SUMMER

roses*
daylily
spiderwort
calendula
dianthus

LATE SUMMER

sunflowers
bee balm*
hollyhock
borage*
centaurea*

*particularly attractive to bees and other pollinators; most of these are blue flowers, the color pollinators prefer.

All of the fifteen are "perennial" in the sense that they will dependably return year after year. A couple are actually annuals whose seed will winter over and start new plants. (Sunflowers, calendula). Borage, calendula, johnny-jump-ups and bee balm will return, but not in exactly the same place. They "wander", that is, their seeds spill a little away from the parent plant, or their roots spread, sending them in slightly new locations. And if you wonder how sunflowers came to be located dozens of feet away from their original location, blame the enterprising squirrel or chipmunk who "moved" the seed for you!

OTHERS: most are annuals

lavender, English daisy, nasturtium, vegetable blossoms (peas, beans, squash), herb flowers (chives, dill, basil, pineapple sage), mints (like licorice mint), tuberous begonias.

While some vegetable blossoms are indeed edible, remember that eating them is a trade-off. If you would prefer to eat winter squash in winter, don't eat all the blossoms in summer! The same goes for any apple blossoms—you can eat the blossom now, or the apple later.

And one last thought: Several plants have both edible leaves and flowers. They are: lavender, nasturtium, most herbs, mints, dandelion and borage. Oddly enough, while borage leaves are edible, they're too prickly to eat fresh, in my opinion. I leave them be.

10 COMMANDMENTS OF EDIBLE FLOWERS

- 1 Eat only those flowers you can positively identify as safe and edible. Learn the Latin or botanical names, which are universally accepted (common names may vary from region to region).
2. Do not assume that restaurants and caterers always know which flowers are edible. Just because it is on your plate does not mean it is edible (see Rule #1).
3. Eat only those flowers that have been grown organically.
4. Do not eat flowers from florists, nurseries, garden centers or public gardens (see Rule #3).
5. Do not eat flowers if you have hay fever, asthma or allergies.
6. Do not eat flowers picked from the side of heavily trafficked roads.
7. Eat only the petals of flowers; always remove and discard the pistils and stamens before eating. (Except for the tiny flowers like thyme where it would be like performing microsurgery to remove the pistils and stamens.)
8. Not all sweet-smelling flowers are edible; some are poisonous.
9. Eat only the flowers of the recommended plants; other parts may be toxic or inedible, even though the flower may be delicious.
10. Gradually introduce flowers into your diet - one at a time and in small quantities, the way you would new food to a baby.

* An excellent reference is the book Edible Flowers from Garden to Palate by Cathy Wilkinson Barash, with 280 recipes for 67 different flowers.

EDIBLE FLOWERS from Garden to Palate

FLOWERS

COMMON NAME	BOTANIC NAME	FLAVOR
<i>leaves & mint</i> * <u>Anise hyssop</u>	<u>Agastache foeniculum</u>	<u>Licorice</u>
<u>Apple</u>	<u>Malus spp.</u>	<u>Floral</u>
<u>Arugula</u>	<u>Eruca vesicaria sativa</u>	<u>Peppery</u>
<u>Banana</u>	<u>Musa spp.</u>	<u>Sweet</u>
<u>Basil</u>	<u>Ocimum basilicum</u>	<u>Herbal</u>
* <u>Bee balm</u>	<u>Monarda didyma</u>	<u>Spicy/sweet</u>
<u>Borage</u>	<u>Borago officinalis</u>	<u>Cucumber</u>
<u>Broccoli</u>	<u>Brassica oleracea, Botrytis group</u>	<u>Spicy</u>
<i>Mexican</i> <u>Calendula</u>	<u>Calendula officinalis</u>	<u>Slightly bitter</u>
<u>Canary creeper</u>	<u>Tropaeolum peregrinum</u>	<u>Peppery</u>
<u>Chamomile</u>	<u>Anthemis nobilis</u>	<u>Apple</u>
<u>Chicory</u>	<u>Cichorium intybus</u>	<u>Slightly bitter</u>
<u>Chives</u>	<u>Allium schoenoprasum</u>	<u>Oniony</u>
<u>Chrysanthemum</u>	<u>Dendranthema grandiflorum</u>	<u>Mild to sl. bitter</u>
<u>Coriander (Cilantro)</u>	<u>Coriandrum sativum</u>	<u>Herbal</u>
<u>Dandelion</u>	<u>Taraxacum officinale</u>	<u>Sweet-sl. bitter</u>
* <u>Daylily</u>	<u>Hemerocallis spp.</u>	<u>Sweet to vegetal</u>
* <u>Dianthus</u>	<u>Dianthus caryophyllus</u>	<u>Sweet, clove</u>
<u>Dill</u>	<u>Anethum graveolens</u>	<u>Herbal</u>
* <u>Elderberry</u>	<u>Sambucus canadensis</u>	<u>Sweet</u>
* <u>English daisy</u>	<u>Bellis perennis</u>	<u>Slightly bitter</u>
<u>Fennel</u>	<u>Foeniculum vulgare</u>	<u>Herbal</u>
<u>Garlic chives</u>	<u>Allium tuberosum</u>	<u>Garlicky</u>

Scented Geranium

- Hibiscus
- *Hollyhock
- Honeysuckle
- Hyssop
- Japanese plum
- Jasmine
- Johnny-jump-up

- Kale
- Lavender

- *Lemon
- Lemon verbena
- Lilac

Basswood

- Linde
- Marjoram
- Mint
- Mustard
- Nasturtium
- Nodding onion
- Okra
- Orange
- Oregano
- Pansy
- Pea
- Pineapple guava
- Pineapple sage
- Radish
- Red clover
- Redbud
- Rose
- Rose of Sharon
- Roselle
- Rosemary
- Runner bean
- Safflower
- Sage

- *Scented geranium
- Signet marigold
- Shungiku
- Society garlic
- Squash blossoms
- Summer savory
- Sunflower

- Sweet woodruff
- Thyme
- Tuberous begonia
- Tulip
- Violet
- Winter savory
- Yucca

- Spiderwort
- Bachelor's Buttons

- Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
- Alcea rosea
- Lonicera japonica
- Hyssopus officinalis
- Prunus 'Mume'
- Jasminum sambac & J. officinale
- Viola tricolor
- Brassica oleracea, Acephala group
- Lavandula spp.
- Citrus limon
- Aloysia triphylla

- *Syringa spp.
- *Tilia spp.
- Origanum vulgare
- Mentha spp.
- Brassica juncea
- Tropaeolum majus
- Allium cernuum
- Abelmoschus esculentus
- Citrus sinensis
- Origanum spp.
- Viola x wittrockiana
- Pisum sativum
- Feijoa sellowiana
- Salvia elegans
- Raphanus sativus
- Trifolium pratense
- Cercis canadensis
- Rosa spp.
- Hibiscus syriacus
- Hibiscus sabdariffa
- Rosmarinus officinalis
- Phaseolus coccineus
- Carthamus tinctorius
- Salvia officinalis
- Pelargonium spp.
- Tagetes signata (T. tenuifolia)
- Chrysanthemum coronarium
- Tulbaghia violacea
- Curcubita pepo spp.
- Satureja hortensis
- Helianthus annuus
- Galium odoratum
- Thymus spp.
- Begonia x tuberhybrida
- Tulipa spp.
- Viola odorata
- Satureja montana
- Yucca spp.

- Tradescantia virginiana
- Centaurea cyanus

- Mild citrus
- Mild nutty
- Sweet floral
- Strong herbal
- Sweet almond
- Sweet floral
- Sl. minty
- Spicy
- Strong floral
- Sweet citrus
- Sweet citrus
- Floral
- Sweet
- Herbal
- Minty
- Spicy
- Peppery
- Oniony
- Mild, sweet
- Sweet citrus
- Herbal
- Slight minty
- Pea-like
- Sweet tropical
- Spicy sweet
- Peppery
- Sweet
- Pea-like
- Floral
- Mild
- Mild citrus
- Herbal
- Bean-like
- Bitter
- Herbal
- Floral
- Citrusy tarragon
- Sl. bitter
- Sweet garlicky
- Vegetal
- Herbal
- Bittersweet
- Fresh, sweet
- Herbal
- Citrus
- Bean- or pea-like
- Sweet floral
- Herbal
- Sweet
- sweet
- Sweet