

**Flowers in the Garden and on the Dinner Plate?**  
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**For week of April 5, 2010**

Since it is too early to plant a garden now would be a great time to make some plans. Did you know that certain flowers can be grown with two purposes? Some of these include flowers that can be eaten. Edible flowers have become popular as garnishes in many restaurants. However, most people do not realize that they can be eaten and are tasty. Below you will find some flowers that can be grown in the home garden and eaten fresh and/or cooked. If you do grow flowers to eat, avoid using pesticides as the flowers often are directly sprayed. It might even be a good idea to start these from seed to ensure that the flowers are pesticide free.

- Nasturtiums** Pop entire flower in your mouth and chew – first a sweet essence from the nectar followed by a bold peppery taste. Nasturtiums flowers are orange, scarlet, yellow, pale orange, and can even have bicolor flowers.
- Pansies** Eat both the petals and sepals (other edible flowers only eat the petals; always remove the pistils and stamens) – pansies have a mild wintergreen flavor. Make hors d’oeuvres by spreading cream cheese on crackers and top with a whole pansy.
- Dandelions** Flowers are edible when young and there are varieties bred for flower size and leaves, which are lovely in the garden. Try frying young flowers dipped in egg and breaded with cornmeal to change the slightly bitter flower into the taste of a mushroom.
- Calendulas  
(Pot Marigold)** Petals can be used like saffron if chopped and cooked with oil to bring out the color and flavor. Calendula petals add pizzazz to carrot cake; sprinkle on the cream cheese icing. Flower color is yellow and orange.
- Squash** Mild vegetable flavor. You can stuff the blossoms with flavored breadcrumbs or ricotta cheese and sauté or fry. Pumpkin and gourd flowers are also edible and you can perform zucchini birth control – the more flowers you eat the less zucchini you will have to deal with during harvest.
- Marigolds** ‘Lemon Gem’ and ‘Tangerine Gem’ cultivars of *Tagetes tenuifolia* with fernlike foliage are edible. Marigolds have a citrusy-tarragon flavor, with little scent. When pulling off the petals break off the right-angled portion as it has a bitter taste. Marigolds can add spice to items such as deviled eggs.
- Most Herbs** Flavor is milder and sweeter than the leaves. Try dill, fennel, basil, chives, cilantro, garlic chives, and mustard.

Edible flowers are as beautiful in the garden as they are tasty in the kitchen. These dual purposed plants that can be included in any garden; formal, cottage, or mixed border. Be sure to pick them in their prime and enjoy them for all their attributes.

As always feel free to contact me with questions or comments about this article at 605-394-2188 or email to *ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu*. Be sure to check out our website at *<http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html>* for an archive of past articles and information about horticulture and 4-H.