

## Edible Deadheading?

Summer's harvest in the vegetable garden is a special treat for those who have the perfect setting, but did you know that your ornamental gardens just might produce a few delectable treats to take to the kitchen table? Obviously, the trick is to know what flowers are truly edible, and be certain that they haven't been contaminated with pesticides or other chemicals. It's also good to know that some flowers have both edible and toxic parts! Who knew?

Many online sites will give you a myriad of charts identifying edible flowers, but here are a few interesting choices that go beyond **Nasturtium**:

**Tuberous Begonias:** This "citrus-sour" taste can be used in salads and as a garnish. The stems can be used in place of rhubarb. (Caution: If you have gout, rheumatism or kidney stones, beware that the flower and stems contain Oxalic acid—not good.)

**Wax Begonias:** Raw or cooked, they can have a slightly bitter after taste, but what a darling garnish!

**Calendula Officinalis (also called Marigold):** The pretty petals in golden-orange hues can be sprinkled on soups, pasta or rice, herbed butters and salads. Flavors have a range from spicy to bitter, tangy to peppery. ONLY THE PETALS ARE EDIBLE!

**Carnations (also called Dianthus):** Steep them in wine, decorate a cake, add color to salads or aspics. TAKE OFF THE BITTER WHITE BASE PART OF THE FLOWER FIRST. The scent is light clove-like, and nutmeg-like. (The French liquor, Chartreuse has made with this flower since the 17<sup>th</sup> century!)

**Chrysanthemums:** Blanch them first, then scatter the red, white, yellow or orange petals on a salad. TAKE OFF THE BITTER WHITE PART OF THE FLOWER. Flavor vinegars with the leaves. Flowers are tangy and slightly bitter tasting.

**Fucia:** Blooms are slightly acidic in flavor, but the explosive colors and elegant shape can really decorate a serving platter!

**Basil:** The pink, white or lavender flower is similar in taste to the leaf.

**Lavender:** My favorite! Do place a sprig into your glass of champagne! I add it to my lamb marinades. Custards and sorbets love lavender petals. (NOT TALKING ABOUT LAVENDER OIL, HERE! JUST THE FRESH PETALS OFF THE PLANT! WHO KNOWS WHAT IS IN THOSE BOTTLES, AND IF THE PLANTS WERE PESTICIDED?!)

**Sage:** The violet blue flowers are milder in taste, and companion to beans and corn dishes-- and can even be added to your pesto sauces. Of course, it works as a gorgeous garnish to roast chicken!

**Mint:** A slight minty taste that works well with Mid-Eastern dishes.

**Savory, thyme and rosemary flowers are also edible...**

**It's good to know that you can decorate your platters with something lovely from the garden—and, no harm done if someone mistakenly eats it! Enjoy the bountiful SUMMER!**

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