

Williamsburg®

DECORATING TIPS

EDIBLE FLOWERS: GARNISHES FROM THE GARDEN

Pleasing the palate and the eye are goals when using edible flowers and foliage. A garden yielding edible flowers throughout the seasons will give you the materials to create many eye-appealing dishes. For instance, if you sprinkle fresh mixed greens with nasturtiums, both blossoms and leaves, yellow calendula petals, and whole blooms from sage, the result will be a salad of sensational colors. Dressed with a classic vinaigrette, it is a feast for the palate. The other goal is to have these flowers planted close to your kitchen door!

In early spring, Johnny-jump-ups, pansies, violets, and calendula petals provide dramatic colors and forms for decorating a variety of foods. Later, daylilies, fairy roses, borage, the petals of Lemon Gem marigolds, and chive blossoms can be used. In the early fall, pineapple sage blooms not only brighten, but also add a subtle taste to, dishes they accent.



Cut the flowers in the morning after the dew has evaporated. Swish them gently in a bowl of cool water and pat dry. If you are not using them immediately, place the stems in a dish of water or between layers of damp paper towels.

As with herbs, some flowers taste best with certain foods. Daylilies are sweet and have a crisp texture and a taste that serves as a nice complement to pasta when slivered and dressed with lemon thyme, olive oil, and lemon juice. The striking red florets of bee balm are delicious with fruits, cakes, and ice creams.

It is important to learn which plants are edible. Some that are not particularly tasty, yet are not poisonous, can serve as garnishes. Do not use any plant material on food unless you know it is nontoxic.

Know the source of your flowers. Florist flowers have usually been heavily fertilized and sprayed to produce beautiful blooms for show, but not to eat. Even if you are certain that the flowers you select are edible, it is best to use just the petals because stamens and pistils of flowers such as marigolds and tulips can cause reactions in people allergic to pollens.

This article was taken from Susan Hight Rountree's book *From A Colonial Garden*.