



**EZfromSEED**  
Grow plants the way  
Nature does... from seed!



## Easy-From-Seed : Edible Flowers

**Edible Flower Quiz** – Most gardeners know that nasturtiums add a radishy kick to salads. And foodies appreciate the delectable texture and taste of battered and fried squash blossoms. But nasturtiums and squash blossoms are just two of dozens of flowers that go from seed to salad in a matter of weeks. Take this quiz to find out how much you do, or don't know about the edible flowers in your garden:

ONE OF THE FOUR STATEMENTS ABOUT EACH VARIETY IS NOT TRUE.  
WHICH IS IT? (Answers follow the quiz)

1. Scarlet runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) flowers
  - a. taste like beans.
  - b. attract hummingbirds.
  - c. can be used to garnish deviled eggs.
  - d. grow on an annual vine.
  
2. Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)
  - a. flowers can be eaten fresh or used to make tea.
  - b. is perennial, but often blooms the first year when started from seed.
  - c. is a favorite of deer.
  - d. adds a wonderful light licorice flavor to sugar cookies.
  
3. Borage flowers (*Borago officinalis*)
  - a. are beautiful frozen in ice cubes.
  - b. have a pronounced cucumber flavor.
  - c. are one of the few true blue flowers.
  - d. have been added to salads since Elizabethan times.
  
4. Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) flowers
  - a. are known as "poor man's saffron" because petals are sometimes used to color and flavor rice.
  - b. grow easily from seed sown directly into the garden in spring.
  - c. can be dried whole in a well-ventilated space. Petals can then be stripped and saved in a tight jar.
  - d. require at least 6-8 hours of full sun.
  
5. Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

### Quiz Answers:

1. d. Scarlet runner bean is actually a perennial plant in its native Mexico. Other parts of the plant (in addition to the beautiful red flowers) are also edible: the dried bean, the young pods, and even the starchy root.
2. c. Anise hyssop is generally avoided by deer. Use this to your advantage by planting a border of it around your garden.
3. b. Although borage leaves have a pronounced cucumber flavor, the taste of the flowers is so delicate it is hard to define—mildly sweet and oh-so-slightly peppery.
4. d. Scarlet runner bean is actually a perennial plant in its native Mexico. Other parts of the plant (in addition to the beautiful red flowers) are also edible: the dried bean, the young pods, and even the starchy root.
5. c. Anise hyssop is generally avoided by deer. Use this to your advantage by planting a border of it around your garden.
6. d. It is true that calendula plants flower best in full sun, but they also adapt well to partial shade.
7. a. Ok, this one is a little devious. Beside these bright shades, nasturtium flowers also come in cream, apricot, rose and many combinations of these soft warm hues. ‘Black Velvet’ nasturtium is nearly black!

### The Easiest of the Easy

The variety of edible flowers you can grow in your garden is likely more extensive than you realize. And isn't it fortunate that many of them can be grown easily from seed? With fragile flowers, freshness is imperative. They do not store well, which explains why they are so expensive at the market. Plan to integrate a few into your landscape next season, and payback will be threefold: color on your plate, taste on your tongue, and beauty in your garden.



*Flowers of herbs, such as cilantro, often taste similar to the herbs themselves*

#### *How can I tell which flowers are edible?*

Not by taste testing, that's for sure! Consult a reliable source—a University website or a trusted non-profit organization (such as the Home Gardening Seed Association), for example—before popping petals into your mouth. Generally, flowers of edible herbs are tasty and non-toxic.

*Which edible flowers are the easiest to grow from seed?*

There's a sizable list of plants that, sown directly in the garden, yield edible flowers that same season. It doesn't get much easier than that! Prepare the soil by loosening it and adding compost. Sow seed and cover the seedbed lightly with soil.

HGSA recommends the following Top Ten for reliability, fast results, *and* flavor:

Sow in early spring: arugula, bachelors' button, calendula, cilantro, Johnny-jump-up

Sow when the soil warms and night temperatures are above 50°F: borage, nasturtium, scarlet runner bean, signet marigold, squash.

*Where can I fit these edible flowers in my crowded garden?*

Be creative in finding appropriate niches for these beauties. Where there's a will, there's a way! Runner beans are best grown vertically, on an obelisk or trellis. Sow cilantro and bachelors' buttons in spaces where bulbs have died back, and borage in areas vacated by spring greens. Many smaller edible flowers, such as calendula, Johnny-jump-ups, nasturtiums, and signet marigolds, are well suited for container growing. Use a generous-size container so that you will not have to be a slave to its needs in the heat of summer. As for the squash, the space hog, set aside a 3 x 3 foot space for arugula, and follow it with a hill of summer squash (two plants) for a good yield of greens, arugula flowers, squash blossoms, and a summer's worth of fruit as well.



*Sow bachelors' buttons seeds directly in the garden*



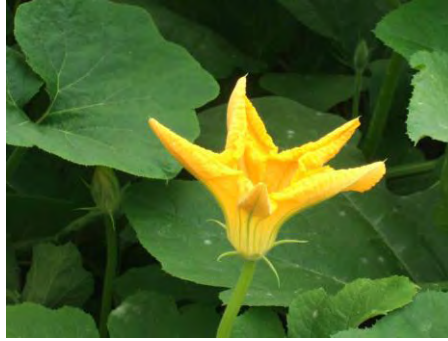
*Clip and use garlic chives flowers to prevent them from self-sowing*



*Grow scarlet runner beans on a teepee or obelisk on a fence.*



*Both nasturtium leaves & flowers are edible*



*Female (above) and male (right) squash blossoms are equally tasty*

### Good Edible Flower Choices To Grow from Seed

Common name	Scientific name	Flavor	Comments
Anise hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Sweet anise-like flavor	Plants attract many different pollinators
Arugula	<i>Eruca vesicaria sativa</i>	Nutty, spicy, peppery flavor – like the leaves	Leaves turn bitter when flowers form
Bachelors' Buttons	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Mild, slightly sweet to spicy	Most often used as a garnish
Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Very mild flavor	Carefully separate the blue flower from its stem
Calendula	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Tangy and slightly peppery	Petals lend a yellow hue to cooked foods
Chives, Garlic Chives	<i>Alliums</i> spp.	Oniony and very flavorful	Clip garlic chive flowers to avoid self-sowing
Cilantro	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Pungent and flavorful—like the leaves	Cilantro flowers make a nice guacamole garnish
Lavender	<i>Lavandula</i> spp.	Floral, slightly perfumey flavor	Intense flavor; use sparingly
Marigold	<i>Tagetes tenuifolia</i>	Flowers smell and taste citrusy	Low mounding plants make a beautiful border
Nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Peppery, spicy, delicious!	Entire flower can be eaten, also the leaves and green seedpods.
Okra	<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i>	Very mild flavor	Flowers are big and beautiful and can be used cooked or raw.
Peas, edible	<i>Pisum sativum</i>	Pea-like flavor	Do <i>not</i> eat sweetpeas ( <i>Lathyrus latifolius</i> )
Scarlet Runner	<i>Phaseolus coccineus</i>	Sweet bean flavor	Beautiful vines need a fence or trellis
Squash	<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>	Soft texture, mild flavor	Both male and female blossoms can be used
Viola	<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Mild pea-like flavor	Candied or used fresh in salads or as a garnish