

'Savoring Year-Round Bounty from your Garden'
Linda Chisari, Landscape Designer
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A. Why grow edibles?

- 1. Health (organic, low refined carbs, high fiber)**
- 2. Cost savings ('Meyer' lemons, tomatoes)**
- 3. Taste (tomatoes, strawberries, apples)**
- 4. Lower 'footprint'-eat seasonally, no plane ticket needed**

B. Raised beds vs. in-ground planting: bending, amending, watering, covering are all easier in raised beds. Directions available for raised beds.

C. Choose best varieties for your climate zone (We are in Sunset Zones 23,24 which are the same as USDA Zones 9,10)

D. Permanent Plantings-see trees and shrubs

E. Water

- 1. Choose Mediterranean varieties (Mediterranean Herbs, Arugula, Mache, 'Genovese' Basil, Figs, Artichokes, etc.)**
- 2. Remember: Someone has to use water to grow your vegetables. Drip irrigation works best for vegetables.**

F. Crop Rotation-3 year cycle

G. Fertilizers/compost (chicken manure, mushroom compost, own compost)

H. Flowers allow pollination of vegetables and can be edible-calendula, nasturium, viola, borage, etc.

I. When to plant different varieties: *Sunset, Union Tribune, Pat Welsh's gardening books*

**Don't use national publications for this advice.
Generalize about fruits vs. leaves vs. roots**

Landscaping with Edible Plants

Trees

Olive
Loquat
Pineapple Guava
Strawberry Guava
Bay Laurel
Pomegranate
Fig
Apple, Plum, Peach, Apricot
Avocado
Persimmon
Citrus (Lemon, Orange, Mandarin, Lime, Kumquat, Grapefruit)
Walnut
Mango
Papaya
Banana

Shrubs

Rosemary
Natal Plum
Bay Laurel
Blueberry
Banana
Dwarf varieties of Citrus
Blackberry

Groundcovers

Strawberry
Mint
Oregano
Thyme

Vines

Grape
Kiwi
Passion Fruit

Perennials

Lavender
Thyme
Sage
Lemon Verbena/Lemon Balm
French Sorrel
Saffron

Resources for Edible Gardens

Seed companies:

Shepherds Seeds,
Cooks Garden,
Natural Gardening Company
Botanical Interest

Seedlings, especially tomatoes and peppers:

Natural Gardening Company

Books:

Edible Gardening by Rosalind Creasy
Cooking from the Garden by Rosalind Creasy,
Edible Garden and Western Garden Book of Edibles (Sunset)
Animal, Vegetable, Mineral by Barbara Kingsolver and family
Designing and Maintaining your Edible Garden Naturally by Robert Kourik
Fresh Food from Small Spaces by R.J. Ruppenthal

Websites:

kitchengardeners.org,
rosalindcreasy.com,
bountifulgardens.com, (Espaliered fruit trees!)
slowfood.org

E is for Edible Flowers

By Judy Paul, Red Bluff Garden Club

I had to think a bit for an alphabet themed topic. E seemed a bit elusive until I thought of edible. I knew that Nasturtiums and squash blossoms were edible, but can't say that I have tried either of them. Well, with the help of Google, I discovered that there is a huge variety of flowers that are edible! If you are intrigued with the possibilities of new tastes, then Google for more details. I also saw that Pinterest has many recipes with awesome pictures.

The practice of eating flowers dates back to early Roman, Middle East, Indian, and Chinese cultures. Often they were favored for their medicinal values. Edible flowers are now "in vogue" and quite common in fancy dining places. Flowers can add color, flavor, and a touch of whimsy to your cooking.

Not every flower is edible, and it is most important to know for sure which are safe to eat. Some can make you sick, cause digestive problems or allergic reactions. So start slowly, trying one variety at a time. It is best to grow your own plants organically, without pesticides and sprays. Never purchase flowers to eat from a florist or gather flowers along a roadside as you can't ensure their safety. Some on the "unsafe" list include Irises, Calla Lilies, Sweet Peas, Oleander, and Periwinkles.

Pick the flowers early in the day, wash thoroughly, and check for insects. It will be best to pick them the day of use, although you can store them in a hard sided container after washing and drying them completely.

In most cases it is the flower petals that are eaten. Pull out the stamens and pistils from the middle of flower. If the petals have a white tip break that off as it is often bitter. Some leaves are fine also. Pansies and Johnny-Jump-ups can be eaten as the whole flower! The flowers are rich in nutrients, and have almost zero calories!!

Edible flowers are used in a variety of ways. Frequently the petals are used in salads, stir fries, pastas, sandwiches, and soups. Many of course are used in teas. They make wonderful flavored vinegars and oils which can later be used for salads and seasonings. They enhance jellies and flavor ice creams and syrups. Sugar-coated flowers make beautiful garnishes for cakes, and the blossoms frozen in ice cubes make a lovely, refreshing drink.

There are many to consider. Agastache, Calendula, Lavender, Nasturtiums, Ros-es, Pansies, Johnny-Jump-ups, Daylilies, Tulips, Marigolds, Hyssop, Mint, Chives, Basil, Bee Balm, Lemon Verbena, and Squash blossoms all offer some wonderful possibilities for culinary experimentation!

Follow the general guidelines, and enjoy a new taste sensation while adding some rainbow colors to your diet. Perhaps this could be a fun new thing to try in the New Year!

