

blue-flowering edibles

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SPIDERWORT (*Tradescantia virginiana*, *T. ohiensis*, *T. bracteata*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Parallel veined, long leaves. Thick stem producing purple flowers at stem tips. Spiderwort Family.

HABITAT: Open wood slopes, valleys

LOCATION: *T. virginiana*... eastern Missouri;
T. ohiensis...statewide;
T. bracteata...scattered in southern Missouri

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Salad, potherb

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This beautiful, deep purple wildflower is a tasty addition to a wild salad. The leaves and stems may both be cut up and used.

It also is a good potherb fixed alone or with other greens. This does not need to be cooked long, just boiled in salted water for a few minutes and coated with butter.

DAYFLOWER (*Commelina communis*,
C. caroliniana,
C. diffusa,
C. erecta)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Flower has 2 blue upper petals larger than the white lower petal. Leaves are wide, but parallel-veined. Plant reclines somewhat. Spiderwort Family.

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HABITAT: Cultivated and waste ground, moist soil, low woods, thickets

LOCATION: *C. communis*... lightly scattered state-wide; *C. caroliniana*... Jackson County only (Steyermark); *C. diffusa*... southern and central Missouri; *C. erecta*... southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: May - October

USES: Potherb



The dayflower is a reputedly questionable edible. While most edible sources do not even list it, Fernald and Kinsey suggest that the group is not considered poisonous and experiments are in order.

My experiments indicated the potherb to be mild, rather bland, and therefore certainly not disagreeable.

I boiled dayflowers in salt water for a short period and seasoned in the following ways: 1) added bacon drippings; 2) doused in butter; 3) mixed with vinegar.

All three ways were appealing. More experiments are in order. The fleshy roots of *C. erecta* varieties can also be cooked as a vegetable.

VIOLETS (*Viola* species)

FLOWERS: March - June

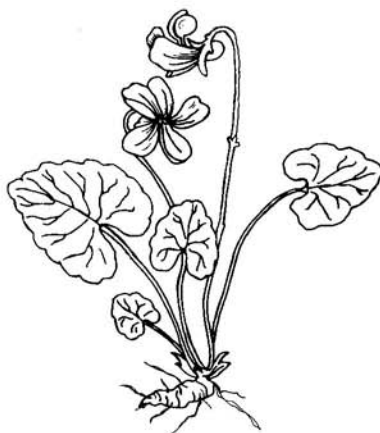
DESCRIPTION: Flowers are irregular, 2 large petals above with 3 smaller ones below. Leaves vary with species. Violet Family.

HABITAT: Widely varied

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Salad, confection, soup, jelly



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This pretty, blue spring flower has several wild edible uses. The leaves and petals may be added to a salad and eaten raw. The leaves are very mucilaginous and therefore a good thickener in soup. It may be used in a vegetable soup as you would okra. Because of this thickening ability, it is often called wild okra.

For a wild sweet tooth, the petals may be dipped in stiff egg whites, rolled in sugar and allowed to dry. Another use for the flowers is in making jelly. Place the flowers in a jar, packing rather firmly. Pour boiling water over the flowers in the jar, cap and allow this to stand for 24 hours. Pour off the liquid and proceed as with regular jelly. Measure the liquid poured off the petals. Put the liquid in a large saucepan and add a package of Sure-Jell per four cups. When the mixture comes almost to a boil, add a cup of sugar for every cup of liquid measured earlier. Cook until the jelly slithers off the spoon.

It's an interesting side-dish for a dinner party. After all, how many times have you been served violet jelly?

SELF-HEAL (*Prunella vulgaris*)

FLOWERS: May - September

DESCRIPTION: Square stem,
tight flowering head.
Opposite leaves, often
with a purple cast on
bottom.

HABITAT: Low woodlands,
borders, banks and
gravel bars of streams,
ponds, ditches, pas-
tures, prairies, fields,
railroads

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LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May -
September

USES: Tea



The common names of self-heal and heal-all were used because some Indians believed it to heal or cure most illnesses. Self-heal must be found the world over, because an old Italian proverb says: "He that hath self-heal and sanicle [black snakeroot] needs no other physician."

A tea is made by soaking the broken leaves in cold water. The leaves may also be dried, powdered and soaked in cold water. This is a bit unusual in that most herb teas are to be drunk warm or hot for the greatest benefit.

