



Integrating Edible Flowers into Food Forests for Sustainable Growth and Culinary Delight

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Borago officinalis or starflower

Edible flowers have been used for centuries in culinary and medicinal traditions. Ancient cultures valued their vibrant colors, fragrances, and healing properties. Today, they are popular in modern gastronomy, adding flavor, aroma, and aesthetic appeal to dishes. Versatile and colorful, flowers like nasturtiums, violets, and marigolds are used in salads, drinks, desserts, and omelets. They also serve as natural sweeteners, syrups, and food colorings, offering both nutrition and visual appeal. Growing edible flowers is a sustainable practice requiring minimal input. They thrive in various conditions and attract pollinators, improving biodiversity and ecosystem health. For farmers, they present a profitable opportunity, allowing diversification and additional income. Fresh flowers, dried petals, and value-added products such as teas and syrups cater to niche markets, making them a valuable agricultural product. In agroforestry systems, edible flowers enhance biodiversity and productivity. Planted alongside tree rows or in hedgerows, they benefit from microclimates created by larger plants. Their presence reduces soil erosion and enriches the ecosystem. In food forests, they thrive in the herbaceous layer, complementing fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, and promoting a balanced, multi-layered system. Examples of edible flowers suitable for agroforestry include calendula, whose petals brighten salads and thrive in diverse conditions, and borage, which adds cucumber-like flavor and attracts pollinators. Chamomile, valued for its medicinal uses, integrates well into hedgerows, while roses can be cultivated for syrups, desserts, and teas. Edible flowers combine sustainability, biodiversity, and economic potential. By integrating them into agroforestry, farmers can create dynamic, productive, and ecologically balanced systems while diversifying their products and income streams. These vibrant crops embody the intersection of beauty, utility, and ecological harmony.



Tobi Hallez

Ghent University



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