

## PHOTOFEATURE

# Flowers as Dishes

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**B**ESIDES the popular edible flowers, various types of flowers are used as food items across the world. Several flower dishes are prepared in various places, as these edible flowers are rich in many nutritional properties and are also used for medicinal purposes in some places. These edible flowers can be obtained from small plants or large trees, but their usefulness is limited to certain regions. Unfortunately, people in other areas are unaware of the benefits of these edible flowers. A few edible flowering plants are discussed below for their nutritional importance and place of availability.

### Red cotton tree

The scientific name of the tree is *Bombax ceiba*, and it belongs to the family Bombacaceae. The tree is also known as the Malabar silk-cotton tree or Semal. It is found in China, Taiwan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, etc. The flowers of the tree are boiled, cooked and eaten as a vegetable (semal ke phulo ki kali ki sabji). The flowers contain B-D-glucoside of B-sitosterol, hentriacontane, hentriacontanol, kaempferol, quercetin, essential oil, pelargonidin cyaniding, etc. It is believed that the vegetable of its flowers is beneficial for health.



*Bombax ceiba* (Red cotton tree)

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*Crotalaria Juncea* (Sunn Hemp)

### Sunn hemp

The tree with the scientific name *Crotalaria juncea* also known as Sanai or brown hemp or Indian hemp or Madras hemp in India, belongs to the Fabaceae family. Its flowers are derived from one of the many types of plants whose fibres are used to make ropes from the stem. The small or slightly larger buds are used for curing, which makes a delicious vegetable. Its small buds are green due to the, and large buds have yellow petals visible outside the cover. Only the buds with cover are cooked. Calcium, phosphorus and fibre are prominent in the Sunn hemp flower.

### Banana

The scientific name is *Musa paradisiaca* and it belongs to Musaceae family. The Banana flower, also known as the banana heart, possesses medicinal properties. It has a powerful nutritional profile containing a wealth of nutrients, including essential minerals such as phosphorous, calcium, potassium, copper, magnesium, fibre, iron and vitamin E, which are important for many bodily functions. Its flower contains energy 51 kcal, protein 1.6 g, fat 0.6 g, carbohydrate 9.9 g, fibre 5.7 g, calcium 56 mg, phosphorus 73.3 mg, iron 56.4 mg, copper 13 mg, potassium 553.3 mg, magnesium 48.7 mg, vitamin E 1.07 mg per 100 grams. The banana flower looks similar to common flowers and is pink in colour, but it is slightly larger in size and has a white flower in the centre of its petals, which can be eaten and also make a tasty vegetable.



*Musa paradisiaca* (Banana flower)

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