

Rose Mallow

Hibiscus moscheutos

Mallow Family – Malvaceae

Whosoever shall take a teaspoon of the Mallows shall that day be free from all diseases that may come to him. ~ Pliny



At the peak of summer, when the sun's rays are the most intense, and the temperatures climb to record highs, the mallows bloom. The marshes are dotted with pinks and whites of several species of the mallow family (Malvaceae). They are members of the same family that includes okra, hibiscus, hollyhock and cotton plus about 1500 other species that grow throughout the world. Mallows are fairly easy to recognize with five petals and a center that looks like a bottlebrush from the way the stamens are attached to the sides of the pistil. While okra is the one most people associate with as edible, none are poisonous and most have been used as food by early cultures.

Description & Habitat:

Rose mallow is a large, herbaceous perennial, reaching heights of 3-8 feet by the end of the summer. From July to September, it produces large, showy flowers, with usually white but occasionally pink petals. Following the flowers are the fruits, which are 5-parted capsules containing seeds within the chambers. The fruits of the rose mallow are larger than those of the weedy common mallow that grows in lawns and gardens and referred to as cheeses. Rose mallow fruits measure up to 2 inches in length.

Uses

Flower petals are mild tasting and crunchy and can be added to salads or teas. Studies indicate that dehydrated petals contain substantial amounts of dietary proteins, sugars, fiber and unsaturated fats as well as most of the major dietary vitamins (www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/ncnu02/v5-556.html). Mallows contain large quantities of mucilage, pectin, and asparagin, making them beneficial as a demulcent and emollient in dysentery and lung and urinary ailments (Foster and Duke, *Medicinal Plants and Herbs*, 2000). Because of its soothing, softening, protective coating qualities it has been found useful in inflammation and irritation of the respiratory tract, urinary passages, and alimentary canal, and in ointments



and poultices for external sores and irritations (Gibbons, Euell, *Stalking the Healthful Herbs*, 1966). An infusion of one teaspoon fresh leaves and/or roots to one cup of boiling, especially if sweetened with honey, has been found to loosen coughs and ease the symptoms of bronchitis and sore throats; relieve irritations of the bowels, kidneys, and urinary organs; ease the pain of tonsillitis; relieve hoarseness; soothe upset stomachs and ease stomachaches. The tea is also said to possess diuretic properties (Dr. Peter Gail, *The Business of Herbs*, September/October, 1995).

Mallow water, made by boiling a cup of mallow fruits in 2 cups water, is the base for many remedies, including cough syrup and hand lotion (Gibbons, Euell. *Stalking the Healthful Herbs*, 1966).

Summer Cooler

This is a good tea to drink on a hot, summer afternoon after being outside all day. The mallow flowers, lemon balm, and lemon verbena have a cooling effect while the peppermint and spearmint add flavor.

Rose mallow flowers, unopened
Lemon balm leaves
Lemon verbena leaves
Peppermint leaves
Spearmint leaves and flower tops

Preparation:

Infuse the herbs in cold water and let stand for several hours. Strain and serve.

Wild Vegetable Stir-Fry

1 medium onion	young mallow fruits, sliced
1 green pepper	ground cherry fruits
1 chili pepper	1 ear fresh corn, cut from stalk
olive oil	
Heat oil, add vegetables and cook on medium heat 5-10 minutes.	