

**Latin Name/Genus:** *Helianthus annuus*

Family: Asteraceae

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Season:** Warm Season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** Hardy to Zone 2



**Timing:** Begin Sunflowers seeds indoors 3-4 weeks prior to transplanting them in the garden (peat or paper pots recommended – they don't do well having their roots disturbed too much during transplantation). Direct sow Sunflower seeds in the spring, once the threat of frost has passed and the soil has warmed to at least 13°C (55°F) 2.5-5cm (1-2") deep in shallow trenches approximately 15cm (6") apart; keep moist (but not soggy) until they germinate within 7-10 days. Taller varieties should be thinned to approximately 30-45cm (1-1.5') apart, while dwarf varieties can spaced 30cm (1') apart.

**Starting:** Plant Sunflowers in a sunny location, sheltered from strong winds (can plant in groups to support each other against wind and rain).

**Growing:** Sunflowers aren't picky, flourishing in acidic, neutral, and alkaline soils alike; ensure plants are in well-drained soil; water regularly – allow top 2.5-5cm (1-2") of soil to dry out between waterings; may have to water more if in warmer climates. Taller cultivars may need to be staked or planted along a fence to keep them growing upright (be sure to be careful not to damage its roots); ensure the base of the plant is well weeded/mulched to help maintain soil moisture and weed suppression. Wildlife enjoy seedlings so protect with row covers or screening until plants are 30-60cm (1-2') tall.

**Nutrient Preferences:** Sunflowers like their soil composed of organic matter, so adding compost when planting seeds is ideal; they also appreciate fertilizers high in phosphorus and potassium. If growing in rich, loamy soil, fertilizer supplementation is likely unnecessary; if growing in poor soil, considering applying a slow-release fertilizer beginning in spring; do not overfeed, as this will cause stalks to become thin/spindly.

**Blooms:** When harvesting, cut whole head with approximately 30cm (1') of stem attached, and hang it in a warm, dry, well-ventilated area away from pests; cover seed heads with cheesecloth or a paper bag to catch seeds, poking small holes for ventilation. When seeds are completely dry, rub them off and collect – largest, most plump seeds can be stored in a dry, cool location to plant the following season. Sunflower heads, as well as sunflower leaves, can be eaten. Typical cultivars of Sunflowers do not require pruning; cut plants to the ground once they show signs of browning/drying.

**Disease & Pests:** Birds and rodents are very fond of Sunflower seeds, while sunflower moths lay eggs and raise their larvae on the plant (seen as holes in seeds); beetles and caterpillars also enjoying eating Sunflower foliage. Sunflowers are prone to fungal diseases (ie. Powdery mildew, rust). If growing in a humid location, ensure soil is well-draining and there is good air circulation between plants to



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**Companion Planting:** Sunflowers are beneficial when planted near rows of corn, as they are said to increase yields. Sunflowers can be used to draw heavy metals, toxins, and even radiation from soil, but should be burned at the end of the season if grown for this purpose. Sunflowers also enjoy being planted near crimson clover, zucchini, melons, onions, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, lettuce, kale, chives, basil, marigolds, daisies, and snapdragons. Plant sunflowers amid squash plantings to improve pollination and overall production; avoid planting Sunflowers near potatoes, fennel, and hyssop.

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**Disease & Pests:** Birds and rodents are very fond of Sunflower seeds, while sunflower moths lay eggs and raise their larvae on the plant (seen as holes in seeds); beetles and caterpillars also enjoying eating Sunflower foliage. Sunflowers are prone to fungal diseases (ie. Powdery mildew, rust). If growing in a humid location, ensure soil is well-draining and there is good air circulation between plants to



## Sunflowers

### *Plant Care Information*

prevent root rot and other diseases. Stem cankers should be dealt with immediately, using fungicide, or removing the plant and destroying it; leaf spot can often be treated with garlic spray or diluted apple cider vinegar – severe cases will require removal of the plant.

**Companion Planting:** Sunflowers are beneficial when planted near rows of corn, as they are said to increase yields. Sunflowers can be used to draw heavy metals, toxins, and even radiation from soil, but should be burned at the end of the season if grown for this purpose. Sunflowers also enjoy being planted near crimson clover, zucchini, melons, onions, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, lettuce, kale, chives, basil, marigolds, daisies, and snapdragons. Plant sunflowers amid squash plantings to improve pollination and overall production; avoid planting Sunflowers near potatoes, fennel, and hyssop.

**Latin Name/Genus:** *Helianthus annuus*

Family: Asteraceae

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Season:** Warm Season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** Hardy to Zone 2



**Timing:** Begin Sunflowers seeds indoors 3-4 weeks prior to transplanting them in the garden (peat or paper pots recommended – they don't do well having their roots disturbed too much during transplantation). Direct sow Sunflower seeds in the spring, once the threat of frost has passed and the soil has warmed to at least 13°C (55°F) 2.5-5cm (1-2") deep in shallow trenches approximately 15cm (6") apart; keep moist (but not soggy) until they germinate within 7-10 days. Taller varieties should be thinned to approximately 30-45cm (1-1.5') apart, while dwarf varieties can spaced 30cm (1') apart.

**Starting:** Plant Sunflowers in a sunny location, sheltered from strong winds (can plant in groups to support each other against wind and rain).

**Growing:** Sunflowers aren't picky, flourishing in acidic, neutral, and alkaline soils alike; ensure plants are in well-drained soil; water regularly – allow top 2.5-5cm (1-2") of soil to dry out between waterings; may have to water more if in warmer climates. Taller cultivars may need to be staked or planted along a fence to keep them growing upright (be sure to be careful not to damage its roots); ensure the base of the plant is well weeded/mulched to help maintain soil moisture and weed suppression. Wildlife enjoy seedlings so protect with row covers or screening until plants are 30-60cm (1-2') tall.

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