

Sunflower Growing Tips

When to Plant:

- Seeds should be planted directly into the garden after the danger of frost has passed. The frost free date for our area is May 15th. However, some of the larger sunflower varieties may be planted up to two weeks before the frost free date to be ready for the festival.
- If a late frost is expected, seedlings may be covered with a light sheet over night to protect them from low temperatures.
- The number of days to maturity varies depending on variety. Please consult the chart below to determine when to plant your seeds.
- To extend the bloom time of your sunflowers, stagger plantings every two to three weeks for continuous blooms through fall.

How to Plant:

- It is best to sow seeds directly into the soil in your garden. Sunflower seeds have a long tap root and do not like to be disturbed by transplanting. Dwarf varieties can be planted directly into a large pot where they will be grown throughout the season.
- Choose a location that receives full sun (6-8 hours per day), and is well drained. Sunflowers will grow in poor soil, however, the better the soil, the larger the plants will grow and the more blooms the plants will produce.
- Lightly till the area to be planted to loosen the soil. Sunflowers are very tough and can grow in less than ideal soil. However, if you have heavy clay or compacted soil, working in several inches of organic matter will improve the soil and allow for better plant growth.
- Plant seeds 1-2 inches deep and water well.
- Keep the soil moist, but not soggy, until the seeds have sprouted.
- Seeds should be planted about 6 inches apart, but thinned to 30 inches apart once they reach 6 inches tall.

Caring for plants:

- After plants have become established, water deeply and regularly to encourage deep rooting.
- Sunflower seedlings are very attractive to wildlife. Young plants may need to be protected from snails and slugs with repellent. Netting or fencing may be needed to prevent birds and rabbits from eating the seedlings.
- Sunflowers do not require fertilizing, but will grow larger with some fertilizer. Fertilize lightly at planting time and occasionally throughout the growing season with a balanced fertilizer to increase growth. Too much nitrogen fertilizer can delay blooming and cause weak stems that may break off.
- Tall varieties, and plants with large heads may need to be staked to prevent stem breakage in strong winds.

Variety	Days to Bloom	Flower Size	Plant Height	Stems	Flower Color
Russian Mammoth	80 - 90	12+ inches	12+ feet	Single	Yellow
Vanilla Ice	75 - 90	5-7 inches	4-7 feet	Branching	Creamy White
Autumn Beauty	80 - 90	6-8 inches	5-7 feet	Branching	Mix of Yellow, Orange, Maroon, & Bi-color
Elves Blend	50 - 60	3-5 inches	1.5 – 3 feet	Branching	Mix of Classic & Multi-petaled Yellows
Lemon Queen	70 - 90	4-6 inches	5-7 feet	Single	Pale Lemon Yellow

Sunflower Show Categories: Tallest with stem, most blooms per plant, largest head, smallest head, prettiest, ugliest, most unusual, and sunflower floral arrangement. There will be a **Youth** division (ages 17 and under) and an **Adult** division (ages 18 and up).