



Yardener[®]

**EMBRACING THE
GARDEN SUNFLOWER**



In our journey through the world of garden sunflowers

We uncover a rich history. These annual sunflowers have their roots in the Great Plains, where they were first cultivated by Native American communities for their seeds. Over time, these resilient plants have ventured beyond the Plains and become a familiar presence in late summer landscapes, gracing fields and roadsides with their vibrant blooms.

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Variety in Sunflower Sizes

As we delve into the diverse

world of garden sunflowers, we encounter a wide range of sizes. From the humble dwarf varieties, standing at just under two feet tall, to the majestic giants that soar above 15 feet, these plants possess an incredible capacity for adaptation. Soil quality and moisture levels influence their stature, making them a living testament to the harmony between nature and nurture.





Sunflower Foliage Up Close

The foliage of sunflowers is as unique as the plants themselves. Their leaves, resembling large, egg-shaped canvases, are adorned with a rustic coat of coarse hairs. Along their edges, shallow tooth-like structures add character. Stems, robust and sporting their own share of hairiness, play a crucial role in supporting these plants. While some varieties maintain a single stem, others branch repeatedly, offering ample support for multiple, sizable flowers.



The Beauty of Sunflower Blooms

Garden sunflowers boast vibrant blooms with hues spanning mahogany, orange, lemon yellow, and red. Their splendid appearance graces our gardens in late summer. The sunflower's "head" houses two flower types - the outer "petals," each a tiny flower in its own right, serve as inviting beacons for pollinators. Meanwhile, the heart of the head consists of minuscule tubular disk flowers, which eventually mature into the coveted seeds. Certain modern hybrids, though, offer a unique twist by not producing pollen or seeds, making them a prized choice for specific applications. Sunflower heads vary in size, from a foot in diameter to more modest 5- to 6-inch blooms.



Sunflowers, the nature's radiant smile. See what else we have here:



- Sunflower Choices**
- Planting Sunflowers**
- Using Sunflowers**
- Caring for Sunflowers**
- Sunflower Problems**





Sunflower Varieties

Tall, single-stem varieties reach 8 to 15 feet and yield giant 12-inch blooms with around 900 seeds per head, including 'Mammoth Russian' and 'Giant Gray Stripe.'

Mid-sized branching types stand 5 to 8 feet tall, showcasing multicolored flowers like 'Italian White,' 'Sunrise,' and 'Valentine.'

Dwarf varieties, at 1 to 2 feet, boast good-sized blooms, including 'Sunspot' and 'Big Smile' (just 12 inches tall).

Pollenless hybrids, perfect for cut flowers, grow 3 to 6 feet tall, such as 'Moonbright' and 'Sunrich Orange.'

Discover other annual sunflowers like the Silverleaf Sunflower, Cucumberleaf Sunflower, and Prairie Sunflower.





Planting Sunflowers

Growing sunflowers outdoors is straightforward. These hardy plants need full sun and well-drained soil. For outdoor sowing, wait until after the last spring frost, or a couple of weeks before in short growing seasons. Prepare the soil, sow seeds 1-2 inches deep, and space them 6-8 inches apart. Thin them once they're a few inches tall. Depending on the variety, sunflowers will mature in 80-120 days. For optimal seed production, plant them in rows 2-3 feet apart. To grow smaller sunflowers for bouquets, space them closer, about 6 inches apart. Skip fertilization for this purpose. Sow new rows every 2-3 weeks for a continuous supply of cut flowers.



Using Sunflowers

Sunflowers, your garden's dynamic companions! These resilient plants offer versatile garden solutions. From providing informal boundaries and screens to enhancing planted borders and meadows, sunflowers adapt to various garden roles. Beware of their inhibiting influence on some plants like potatoes and beans.

They also beckon nature, attracting birds like cardinals and finches while hosting beneficial insects like honeybees and ladybugs. For indoor enthusiasts, they make splendid bouquets. When dried, they preserve their beauty using methods like sand, Borax, or silica gel.

Come harvest, these treasures yield highly nutritious seeds, a culinary delight packed with vitamins and proteins. Enjoy them as snacks, salad toppings, or in various recipes. Sunflowers, where beauty meets functionality!





Caring for Sunflowers

Cultivating healthy sunflowers involves regular watering, especially during their vital growth phase. Adding a slow-release fertilizer to the soil can aid their development, but excessive nitrogen should be avoided to prevent delayed flowering. Mulching with organic materials not only retains soil moisture but also suppresses weeds and enriches the soil as it decomposes. For taller or multi-branched sunflowers, providing staking support is essential to safeguard them from damage caused by wind or rain, ensuring their overall well-being.





Sunflower Problems

Sunflowers may encounter fungal diseases, such as Downy Mildew, resulting in pale areas on leaves and fuzzy mold growth. Rust, appearing as yellow spots turning brown or black, can affect stems and flowers. Early detection allows for the use of garden fungicides to protect healthy foliage, with infected plants being removed and tools disinfected.

Damping-Off Disease, caused by fungi, affects young plant stems and flower heads, often causing them to rot at the soil line. Proper soil drainage, warm planting conditions, and adequate air circulation can reduce the risk.

Sunflower Moth larvae can damage flowers and seeds, leading to a web of debris. Hand-picking the larvae or using products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* can help control infestations.

Birds and squirrels may disrupt sunflower seed heads as they ripen. To deter them, use barrier devices like white garden fleece or remove nearby leaves to make perching difficult.

For a thriving sunflower garden, it's essential to manage these potential issues effectively.





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sunflowers?**

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