

Sunflower Seeds

- Zone 3-9
- Full Sun
- Plant Type Medium size
- Bloom Season Spring, Summer and fall
- Plant Height 3'-12'
- Ornamental Use
- Features Attracts Bees and Butterfly's
- Life Cycle Perennial, Annual

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) are perhaps one of the easiest flowers that you can grow in the garden. They are so easy to grow that they are frequently used to introduce very young gardeners to the joys of gardening.

Many gardeners fondly remember planting the black and white seeds of giant sunflowers and watching in wonder as they grew to tower into the sky.

But just because sunflowers are easy to grow does not mean that they should be dismissed from the grown-up garden. The variety of sunflowers available to the home gardener is absolutely amazing and, as an added bonus, sunflowers can help attract some local birds to your garden.

Growing Sunflowers

If you decide to add sunflowers to your garden, there are a few things you will want to keep in mind.

First of all, sunflowers are called sunflowers for a reason. They need sun. Make sure that the location you choose for your sunflowers gets full sun. Second, you do not need to worry about soil too much. Sunflowers are not picky about the conditions of the soil, but they are plants. They will do better in better soil. Third, sunflower seed shells do contain a substance that is toxic to grass. So, you will need to either harvest the sunflower heads before the seeds begin to fall out or you will need to plant your sunflowers in a location where you do not mind any nearby grass being killed. Fourth, keep in mind the height of the sunflower variety you have chosen. A giant, twelve foot (3.5 m.) variety will end up acting very much like a small tree and may shade the surrounding flowers. As mentioned above, sunflowers can also help you to attract local birds to your garden. When the growing season is coming to a close, you can harvest your sunflower heads and use some of the seeds to feed the birds over the winter. You have two options when using sunflower seeds to feed the birds. The first is that you can simply leave the sunflower heads outside for the birds. This option is the easiest but be warned that the birds will make a mess when pulling the seeds out of the sunflower head. Your other option is to remove the seeds from the head and to put them in your bird feeder. This method is a little more work but will be neater in the long run. Also, putting the seeds in a birdfeeder will also help to keep your feathered friends safe as the birdfeeder will be up off the ground and out of reach of many of the animals that eat birds. So, while you may have fond memories of tall yellow sunflowers that you planted as a child, give this old garden favorite a new try and rediscover the world of sunflowers.