

All about sunflowers

Sunflowers are not only beautiful flowers. They also have many different uses.

Origins

The wild sunflower originally came from North America. It is believed that the sunflower was brought to Europe in the 1500s by Spanish explorers. Since then, the sunflower has become a hugely popular flower.



How to grow

Sunflowers need lots of sunshine, so it is important to plant them in a sunny spot. Here are some top tips for planting a sunflower:

- plant seeds straight into the ground, half a metre apart
- water regularly
- keep away slugs and snails
- grow against a wall or use a cane to support the plants

Moving flowers

Did you know that sunflowers can move? This is because of a special quality known as heliotropism. The young sunflower buds face the Sun in the morning and turn to follow it as the Earth rotates throughout the day. They continue to do this until their flowers heads grow to be too heavy to move.



Fun facts

- According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the tallest sunflower ever recorded was 9.17 m.
- There can be as many as 2000 seeds in just one sunflower!
- Did you know that there are two different coloured sunflower seeds? Black seeds are used for making oil and stripy ones are eaten.

Why do farmers grow sunflowers?

Farmers grow sunflowers because their seeds can be used for many things. They can be eaten raw, roasted or dried, ground to make flour or squeezed to make oil. The petals, stalk, leaves and roots may also be used in medicines, fed to animals or used to make an organic fabric dye.