



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Master Gardener™

Growing in Oregon Sunflowers

Quick Garden Tips

- 1 Sunflowers bring cheerful color to any garden or container. Different types vary in size, shape and color.
- 2 Some sunflowers are pollenless, which means they are not likely to produce seeds or feed pollinators. Look at the seed packet for information.
- 3 Plant seeds about 1 inch deep and 3 to 4 inches apart into your soil. When seedlings are 3 to 4 inches tall, remove extras to allow 6 to 18 inches between each seedling and other nearby plants.
- 4 Sunflowers like plenty of water to grow strong. Water deeply 1 to 2 times a week. After flowering they need less water.
- 5 For a good crop of seeds, add compost to the soil at planting time. After one month of growth, add a balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10. Read fertilizer directions carefully.



Season and Location

☀️ Plant in full sun after your last frost date.



☀️ Sunflowers grow best in soil that drains well.

Pollinator Notes

☀️ A sunflower head is made of hundreds of small flowers that produce pollen and nectar. Each flower will turn to a seed after it is fertilized by pollination.

☀️ Many insects can pollinate sunflowers. They are the favorite plant of some long-horned bees.



Bumble bee

Long-horned bee

Not to scale

Key Pests and Diseases

☀️ Birds, deer, rodents and squirrels love eating the young plants and seeds.

☀️ Protect seeds and seedlings with a barrier such as a clear plastic bottle with its bottom cut off and the cut edge pushed into the soil.



Oregon Gardening Calendar for Sunflowers

Did you know? Young sunflower buds move with the sun across the sky each day. When the flower head opens, they remain facing east.

Central/Eastern



Willamette Valley



Coast



JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN

🌱 Plant seeds 🌻 Harvest flowers

Recommended Types to Grow

All sunflower seeds are edible. These varieties will make large seeds that are great for snacking.

Giganteus (6 to 8 feet tall)

Mammoth and Mammoth Greystripe
(9 to 12 feet tall)

Mongolian Giant (12 to 14 feet tall)

Snack Mix (5 to 7 feet tall)

Sunseed (4 to 5 feet tall)

Titan (12 to 14 feet tall)

Tall varieties with large or many flower heads may need support to keep from falling over. Attach plants to sturdy stakes with soft ties when they are 2 to 3 feet tall.



When and How to Harvest

- ✿ A sunflower is ready to harvest when the flower head begins to droop over and dry out. Cut the head off to avoid losing seeds to birds and other critters. Leave some stem attached if you want to hang it to dry.
- ✿ Rub off the little flowers. Hang or place heads in a warm, dry place with airflow. Protect them from rodents and insects.
- ✿ When the seeds are dry, rub or brush them off with your fingers or a stiff brush.
- ✿ Spread seeds on a cloth to dry for a few more days. Store in airtight containers.



Roasted Sunflower Seeds

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: varies

Makes: 1 cup

Ingredients

1 cup **sunflower seeds**

1 to 2 teaspoons **vegetable oil**

seasonings as desired

Directions

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Rinse sunflower seeds and pat dry.
3. Toss 1 cup dry seeds with 1 to 2 teaspoons vegetable oil and seasonings of your choice.
4. Spread the seeds in a large, flat bowl. Microwave on HIGH for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes, until golden.
or
Spread the seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 to 25 minutes, stirring several times, until golden.
5. Store roasted seeds in an airtight container.

