

How to Grow Sunflowers: Back to Basics

It's easy to imagine a garden that is full of tall, brightly-colored sunflowers. They're easy to grow, simple to maintain and can add a dazzling splash of color to any landscape. However, though sunflowers are easy to grow and maintain, there are several potential pitfalls. Small critters can steal the seeds before they have a chance to sprout. High winds can decimate a sunflower garden if stakes aren't used for structural support. Wild birds can swoop down to pillage the seeds before they can be stolen by other animals.

By taking a few preventative measures, you can help ensure that your sunflowers grow to be a vibrant, stunning component of your garden. Below, we'll explain how to grow sunflowers and provide a few useful tips for cultivating a gorgeous end-of-summer garden.

Sow The Seeds Indoors

Most enthusiasts plant their sunflower seeds outdoors. But, doing so exposes your seeds to small animals. If left unprotected, these critters will often steal the seeds for food. You can prevent your seeds from disappearing by planting them indoors. This has the added benefit of preventing the frost outside from damaging the seeds. Plant them in peat pots using average to rich soil. Then, place the pots by the window to allow them direct access to sunlight.

You'll notice when you plant your sunflower seeds indoors that they'll grow quickly. You should transplant them from the peat pots into the soil outside by the time the seedlings reach 2 inches. If they grow much taller, they may not be able to stand properly when you transplant them.

Transplanting Your Seedlings

There are several factors to consider when transplanting your sunflowers to the soil outside. First, don't be afraid to get rid of less-than-stellar seedlings. By throwing away the stragglers, you can boost the overall quality of your sunflower garden. Plus, you'll prevent overcrowding (a common tendency amongst novice gardeners). Also, it's important to place your seedlings in an area that receives constant sunlight. Your sunflowers can grow in low-quality soil. But, sunlight is critical.

To ensure a healthy-looking crop of sunflowers, prepare the soil prior to transplanting your seedlings. Dig a small hole a few inches wide and a few inches deep for each sunflower. Use a high-grade soil with a time-released fertilizer. This soil mixture will be more expensive than lower quality soil, but it can have a dramatic impact on the quality of your crop.

Weeding And Watering

Sunflower seedlings are extremely susceptible to drying out. They need to be watered daily from the moment they're transplanted into your soil outside. Once they reach 1 foot in height, their stems should be sturdy. You can reduce how often you water them (every other day should be sufficient). Once your sunflowers grow to 2 feet, you can further reduce watering to every few days.

Also, keep in mind that weeds can quickly overwhelm your sunflower seedlings. Make the effort to keep the weeds at bay. Once your sunflowers are taller, the weeds won't be able to strangle them. You should still eliminate the weeds simply because your garden will look nicer, but your sunflowers won't be vulnerable.

Tender Loving Care

A patch of tall, vibrant sunflowers can look exhilarating. Many can grow over 12 feet. The bright yellow of the heads combined with their majestic height can add a unique blend of personality and nobility to your garden. Growing them is easy. They simply need a little attention each day. Once your sunflowers are fully grown, they won't require as much attention and you'll be able to enjoy the fruits of your labor. With some tender loving care in the beginning, you'll have a garden that attracts the envy of your neighbors.

About the Author

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