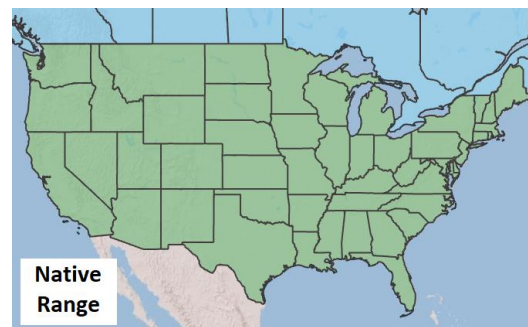


# Sunflower *Helianthus annuus*

**Plant Type:** Native Annual  
**Sun Exposure:** Full Sun  
**Season of Interest:** Summer  
**Bloom Time:** Summer  
**Bloom Color:** Yellow with a Dark Center  
**Height:** 5 to 6 feet  
**Width:** 24 in.  
**Spacing:** 28 in.  
**Water Needs:** Average  
**Maintenance:** Minimal  
**Soil Type:** Clay, Loam, Sandy  
**Soil pH:** Acidic, Neutral, Alkaline  
**Soil Drainage:** Well Drained  
**Pests:** Deer and rabbit (while young)  
**Diseases:** Leaf spot  
**Wildlife:** Bees, Butterflies, Birds



**Description:** Sunflowers are a treasure of summertime. They typically bloom in mid-summer and can persist into early fall. The flowers are around 6 to 8 inches across on average, and have a dark central disk surrounded by yellow petals. Sunflowers grow on a hairy, sturdy, upright stems that can be several feet high. The stems are topped with a single flower. Rough, hairy, oval to triangular leaves grow along the stem. These plants are annual, meaning they complete their life cycle in one year. You should plant them in early to mid summer when to soil is warm. For more information see [plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/helianthus-annuus](https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/helianthus-annuus)



**Care and Growing Tips:** The only mandatory requirements for sunflowers are a sunny location and well-drained soil. If possible, select an area sheltered from strong winds that might topple these tall plants. It can be helpful to plant sunflowers in groups to support each other against wind and rain as the plants can become very top-heavy when in bloom. Planting sunflowers along a fence is the easiest way to support them. Sunflowers don't like to compete with weeds, so keep the garden clean. Mulching around your sunflowers will help maintain soil moisture and suppress weeds. Furthermore, wildlife is often attracted to sunflower seedlings, so it is best to protect seedlings with temporary fencing, removing it once the plants are 6 inches tall.

For the best flowering and sturdiest stems, plant your sunflowers in full sun, meaning at least six hours of direct sunlight per day. Because they are heliotropic (their flower heads rotate to follow the sun), ample sun exposure will help sunflowers remain straight rather than bending toward the direction where the light is strongest. Sunflowers will grow in almost any soil, including poor, dry soils. However, they thrive in well-drained soil that contains a good amount of organic matter. Although drought tolerant, watering sunflowers regularly promotes larger flowers. Allow the top 1 to 2 inches of soil to dry out between waterings. If your sunflowers are drooping and the soil is dry, that's often a sign they need more water. They tolerate high humidity but must have well-draining soil and good air circulation to prevent root rot and other diseases. Sunflowers appreciate a fertilizer high in phosphorus and potassium. If you have rich, loamy soil, you likely will not need to supplement with fertilizer.