

Sunflowers are huge, cheerful, fast-growing flowers that last all summer!

What's more, you can eat the seeds - just sprinkle them over cereal, salad or eat them on their own as a delicious, healthy snack. Birds love eating them too.

## Popular sunflower varieties

### 'High Hopes'

Huge flowers on giant stems - up to 4.5m tall!

### 'Russian Giant'

Yellow flowers, grows up to 2m tall

### 'Helios Flame'

Yellow with a mahogany centre

### 'Velvet Queen'

Deep velvet red colour

## What you'll need:

- Packet of sunflower seeds
- Containers and multi-purpose compost (if using)
- Garden canes and string
- Watering can

## Why should you grow them?

### They're edible

You can eat the seeds! Crack the outer 'hull' of the seeds to get at the edible kernel inside.

### They attract pollinators

The large outer petals help attract bees - and the thousands of 'florets' at the centre contain nectar, a food source for them.

### They feed birds

Birds love sunflower seeds too - especially finches, nuthatches, blackbirds and starlings

## SPACE FLOWER!

A sunflower was the very first flower grown in space! In 2012, astronaut Don Pettit grew a sunflower plant on the International Space Station!



## Step 1: Prepare the ground

- Choose a sunny spot. Sunflowers like to grow in full sun.
- If sowing in the ground, remove any weeds.
- Rake the soil to a fine, crumbly texture.
- Sunflowers grow best in the ground - but you can also grow small ones in pots. If you're using them, fill with compost.

## Step 2: Sow your seeds

- Choose a packet of sunflower seeds - remember to check how tall they'll grow!
- Make some holes 1.5cm deep. Leave a 10cm space between each seed.
- Carefully drop the seeds in and cover with soil.
- Water the seeds gently.
- If growing in pots, use one seed per pot.

## Step 3: Care for your sunflowers

- Slugs and snails like to eat the new shoots! Protect them by placing half of a plastic bottle over your seedlings.
- Water your plants regularly.
- Thin your plants out as they grow, to about 45cm apart.
- Feed your sunflowers with tomato feed just before they flower.
- Once your sunflowers grow taller than you, support the stem with a cane and tie it on loosely with string.
- After flowering, leave the faded heads so the birds can eat the seeds - and harvest some for next year's crop!