

### Tips on growing sunflowers.

Should I soak sunflower seeds before planting? Yes, you could soak seeds to help speed germination but not too long, as soaking the seed in water for too long can actually stop it germinating. A good rule of thumb is 12 to 24 hours. However, I have never felt the need to soak sunflower seeds before sowing.

In Pots or in the Ground? You can sow the seeds directly into the ground in late April or early May, but I'd recommend sowing them in pots to start with. Fill a 7.5 cm pot (or slightly larger) with peat-free compost. Poke one seed per pot down into the compost. Cover with about 1 cm of compost, and then water. Watering is best done daily so the soil in the pot should never dry out. To prevent waterlogging, it is best to lay a drainage layer and use a pot with a drainage hole.

Where should I plant them? Sunflowers need full sun and see 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day – the more the better if you are trying to grow them to their maximum potential. Soil temperature and moisture influence how long it takes for sunflower seeds to germinate, but in most cases you should see sprouts in 7 to 10 days. When it is time to move them from the pot, keep as much compost around the roots. Choose a well-drained location and prepare the soil by digging over an area of about 2-3 feet in circumference to a depth of about 2 feet to loosen the soil. Sunflowers should be planted at the same depth as they were in the pot, with the seedling being gently firmed into the soil to prevent air pockets from forming around the roots.

Why Sunflowers? The sunflower is like gold for native bees, including honeybees, solitary bees, and bumblebees. Both find the yellow sundial of plants to be like a buffet full of nectar and pollen. Did you know that sunflower heads can contain as many as 1,000 to 2,000 seeds. Birds will enjoy the seeds and you can also collect some for yourself for the next year, by placing them in a paper envelope and even share some with friends and family.

**Good luck and keep growing.**