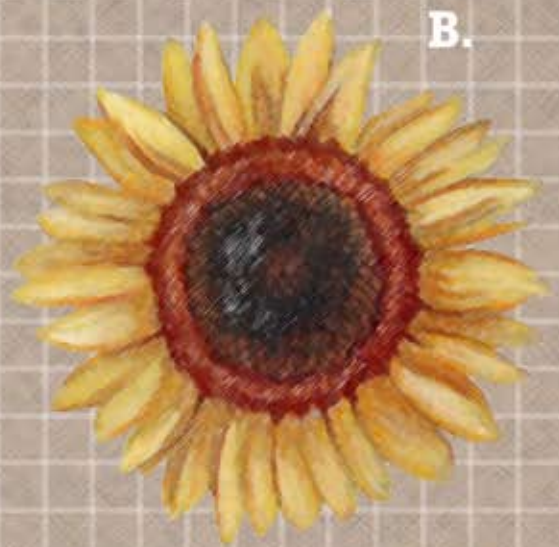


A.



B.

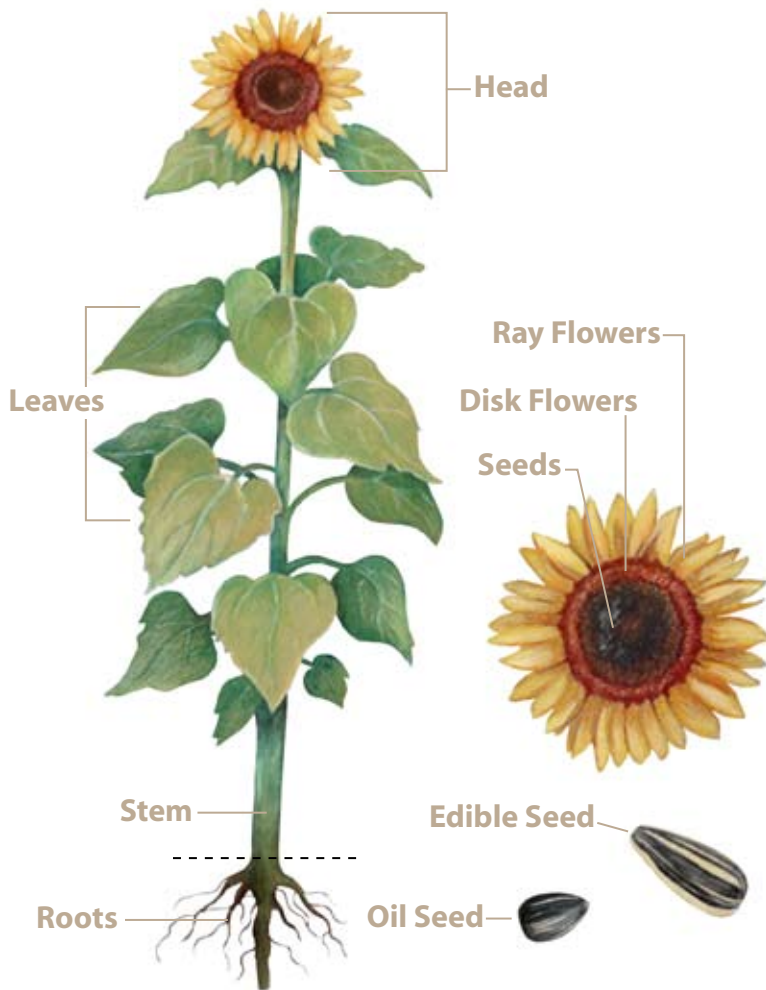


C.

# SUNFLOWERS

*Wm. Robinson*

# SUNFLOWERS



## Sunflowers

The sunflower is a native North American species dating as far back as 3,000 B.C. A fairly common plant throughout the United States, no other plant has such global significance. Of all the oilseed crops, the sunflower has one of the shortest growing seasons. It can also be grown over a wide range of climates. This plant does fairly well under adverse weather conditions and its deep roots use soil moisture efficiently, adapting well in dry regions. The sunflower is the national flower of Russia, as well as a popular crop among Midwest states including Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. Worldwide, more than five million metric tons of sunflower seeds are grown each year. The best oil varieties, developed in Russia, contain about 50% oil and have superior quality for use in cooking.

## Planting

Sunflowers are generally quick-growing, undemanding plants. They need full sun and grow well under a wide range of soil and climate conditions. The best growth is in soils with adequate water-holding capacity, internal drainage and proper fertility. It is best to plant after the last frost date in the area. Sunflowers especially need water during the critical time of 20 days before and after flowering. Flowering usually occurs around mid-summer.

## Harvest

The harvest usually begins in mid-September and can run through October. The seeds are ready to harvest when the disk flowers in the head are shriveled and the head is turned downward. The backs of the heads will also turn a yellowish brown in color. Most sunflowers are harvested with a combine. Birds may damage the crop by eating the seeds in the heads before harvest.

## Uses

The sunflower is produced for a variety of reasons. Oilseed makes up 75% of the sunflower crop. Sunflower oil is light in color, bland in flavor and high in proportion of polyunsaturated fat. It is great for use in not only cooking oils, but also in margarines and shortening, as well as in some candles and soaps. The other 25% of the sunflower crop is the edible seeds. These seeds are produced for human consumption as well as animal feed. Some of the seeds are roasted while others are dehulled and the kernels are sold as "nuts."

## On The Front

### A. Sunflower Plant

The sunflower plant is the only annual flowering plant that grows as high as 12 feet. The roots of a sunflower go deep and spread extensively, allowing for some drought resistance.

### B. Head

Most cultivated sunflowers have only one head. The head of a sunflower can reach a diameter of six to 12 inches. It is composed of yellow ray flowers and a central disk of either yellow, brown, or purple flowers, depending on the species. The seeds are produced in the disk flowers. Heads are "phototropic" which means they follow the sun during the day.

### C. Seeds

Two types of commercial seeds are grown in the United States. The first type, oilseed, is black and very high in oil content. The second type, the edible seed, is larger than the oilseed and it is black-and-white-striped.