

# Sunflower Plant Life Cycle

Sunflowers are a type of flowering plant, which originally came from North America. The sunflower is the national flower of Ukraine. There are around 60 different species of sunflower! They can be yellow, dark red and orange. A popular tall variety is the 'American Giant', and one of the smaller types is called a 'Big Smile'. The tallest sunflower on record was 9.17 metres (30 feet 1 inch) and was grown by Hans-Peter Schiffer in 2014 in Germany! Sunflowers can be used to make lots of different products, such as oil, food and dye. Sunflower seeds can be eaten as a snack by animals and humans - some people sprinkle the seeds on salads.



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## What happens during the first stage?

During the first stage of the sunflower life cycle, the seed is planted in soil or compost in spring when it is warmer. The seeds often have a black and white striped, hard coat, but can also be just black. The hard coat helps to protect the seed. Next, the seed begins to germinate. This is about 1-2 weeks after planting. The plant starts to grow and a tiny root reaches out of the seed and down into the soil.



2

## What happens during the second stage?

During the second stage, a green stem starts to grow above ground. This is a seedling. Underground, roots also continue to grow to keep the sunflower planted in the ground. The roots can grow as deep as 2 metres. A few leaves appear on the stem of the plant. The stem gets harder and thicker, making it stronger.



3

## What happens during the third stage?

During the third stage, the plant grows taller and stronger, facing towards the sun. As the plant grows bigger, a bud also forms after about 30 days. Slowly, the sunflower bud begins to unfold as the flower head opens. After around 90 days from planting, the sunflower will be fully grown. The head of the sunflower will be fully open and that is when you see the fully flowered, beautiful plant.



4

## What happens during the fourth stage?

At the end of the summer the flower petals will start to wilt. This is the final stage of the sunflower life cycle, when the plant dies. Eventually the flower shrivels and the seeds from its head fall onto the ground. A sunflower can produce up to 2000 seeds! Some of the seeds settle in the ground and then begin the new life cycle of the next sunflower.

# Questions about the Sunflower

1. How many different types of sunflower are there and what colours can they be?

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2. Name two varieties of sunflower.

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3. In what different ways can sunflowers be used?

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4. Who grew the tallest ever sunflower? When, where and how tall was it?

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5. When should you plant the seeds?

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6. What is a sunflower seed like and what does it do?

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7. Why do the sunflower's roots grow deep?

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8. What forms after around 30 days? What forms after around 90 days?

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9. What happens just before the plant completely dies?

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10. What does the sunflower produce for the new life cycle? How does it do this?

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# Questions about the Sunflower Plant Life Cycle

## Answers

1. How many different types of sunflower are there and what colours can they be?

**There are around 60 different species of sunflower! They can be yellow, dark red and orange.**

2. Name two varieties of sunflower.

**A popular tall variety is the 'American Giant', and one of the smaller types is called a 'Big Smile'.**

3. In what different ways can sunflowers be used?

**Sunflowers can be used for oil, food and dye. Sunflower seeds can be eaten as a snack by animals and humans - some people sprinkle the seeds on salads.**

4. Who grew the tallest ever sunflower? When, where and how tall was it?

**The tallest sunflower on record was 9.17 metres (30 feet 1 inch) tall. It was grown by Hans-Peter Schiffer in 2014 in Germany!**

5. When should you plant the seeds?

**Sunflower seeds should be planted in soil or compost in spring when it is warmer.**

6. What is the sunflower seed like and what does it do?

**The seeds often have a black and white striped, hard coat, but can also be just black. The hard coat helps to protect the seed.**

7. Why do the roots grow deep?

**Roots continue to grow to keep the sunflower planted in the ground.**

8. What forms after around 30 days? What forms after around 90 days?

**A bud forms after about 30 days. Slowly, the sunflower bud begins to unfold as the flower head opens. After around 90 days from planting, the sunflower will be fully grown.**

9. What happens just before the plant completely dies?

**The flower petals will start to wilt. This is the final stage of the sunflower life cycle, when the plant dies.**

10. What does the sunflower produce for the new life cycle. How does it do this?

**Eventually the flower shrivels and the seeds from its head fall onto the ground. A sunflower can produce up to 2000 seeds! Some of the seeds settle in the ground and then begin the new life cycle of the next sunflower.**