

# Sunflower

Aster Family - Asteraceae



Sunflowers were first cultivated in the 1550s in Europe. Growing in front of you is an heirloom variety called *Helianthus annuus* 'Russian Mammoth'.

The sunflower has the appearance of a single large flower, but in fact it is composed of hundreds of teeny tiny flowers called **florets**. The florets are arranged in the shape of the sun, with **disk florets** tightly bunched together in the center and **ray florets** forming the sun's rays. Each ray floret has a single enlarged petal to guide pollinators to the disk florets, which produce sunflower seeds.

Sunflowers originated in the Western Plains of North America. The seeds are an important source of edible vegetable oil. They are high in calories and are rich in essential acids, minerals, and vitamins.



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