

Sunflowers & Memorial Day

By Steve Rozic, Country Fair Garden Center

Memorial Day is a traditional planting weekend for many of us. Whether you are just getting started, changing out your seasonal displays or finishing up, consider adding sunflowers to your landscape.

These cheery plants are easy to plant and fun to watch grow. All you need are seeds and a bit of garden space or a large container located in a sunny spot in the yard. Purchase the sunflower variety you desire. Grow Paul Bunyan or Mammoth if you want giant plants..., or Elf and Teddy Bear for much shorter plants or use varieties with unique color like Starburst Lemon Arora, Peach Passion, Bashful or Shamrock shake. Many of these varieties are available from the Botanical Interest Seed line and Lake Valley Seed line.

Plant seeds in warm soil about 1 to 2 inches deep and keep the soil moist until the seeds sprout. Once the plants get growing, water thoroughly and as needed. Established plants are drought tolerant though you'll get the best eating seeds when properly watered.

A bit more information: The common and botanical name for sunflower relate to the flower's appearance and tendency to track the sun, a phenomenon known as heliotropism. It's easy to see that the circle of bright yellow petals (really ray flowers) resemble the sun. The botanical name *Helianthus* comes from *helios* meaning sun and *anthos* for flower.