

# Black Oil Sunflower

*Helianthus annuus 'Black Oil'*

## At a Glance

- Height: 5 to 6 feet tall
- Bloom Colors: Bright yellow petals with dark centers
- Bloom Time: Mid to late summer
- Days to Maturity: 90-100 days
- Best For: Birdseed, pollinator gardens, wildlife support

## Growing Conditions Quick Reference

- Soil Temperature: 60-70F for best germination
- Soil Type: Well-drained, moderately fertile soil
- Light Requirements: Full sun (6-8+ hours daily)
- Planting Depth: 1 inch deep
- Seeding Rate: 1-2 seeds every 12-18 inches
- Plant Spacing: Thin to 12-18 inches apart for strong stems
- Moisture Needs: Moderate; water deeply but infrequently
- Average Germination Time: 7-10 days under warm conditions

## How to Grow

- When to Plant: Direct sow after the last frost when soil reaches 60F.
- Location: Full sun with well-drained soil.
- Spacing: Sow seeds 12-18 inches apart.
- Watering: Moderate watering; avoid waterlogging.
- Fertilizer: Minimal needs, but light compost at planting helps.

## Tips for Success

- Plant in blocks or rows for better pollination.
- Protect young seedlings from birds until established.
- Stake if needed in windy areas.
- Harvest heads when seeds are fully developed but before birds eat them all.

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## Fun Fact

Black Oil Sunflowers are the most popular seed for feeding birds, producing high-oil seeds loved by finches, cardinals, and chickadees.

## Companion Planting

Pairs well with corn and beans in Three Sisters gardens. Can provide light shade for heat-sensitive crops like lettuce.

## Harvesting and Use

Cut flower heads when backs turn yellow and seeds are plump. Hang to dry in a warm, dry place, then rub seeds free for birdseed or roasting.

## Quick Planting Checklist

- Sow outdoors after last frost
- Keep soil warm (60-70F)
- Thin seedlings to 12-18 inches apart
- Provide full sun and moderate water
- Stake if needed for support
- Harvest heads when backs turn yellow