

The Sunflower Challenge

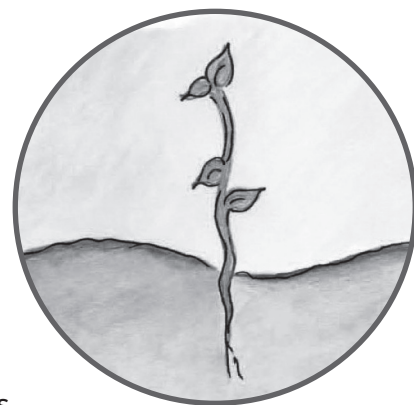
GROW A SMALL ONE, GROW A TALL ONE. GROWING SUNFLOWERS IS EASY AND FUN!

Starting seeds and caring for plants as they sprout, grow and flower is great hands-on learning experience. In the classroom and at home, students will learn about the lifecycle of plants and then test themselves by participating in the Sunflower Challenge.



1. Learn about the lifecycle of plants.

Read *Every Seed Counts* with your class. Discuss the lifecycle of the sunflower, from seed to blooming plant and back to seed again. Can your students act out or draw the different stages of the sunflower plant? Try making a list of everything a seed needs to grow into a mature plant. Make copies of the counting activity at the back of the book and see if your students can count the petals of the sunflower!

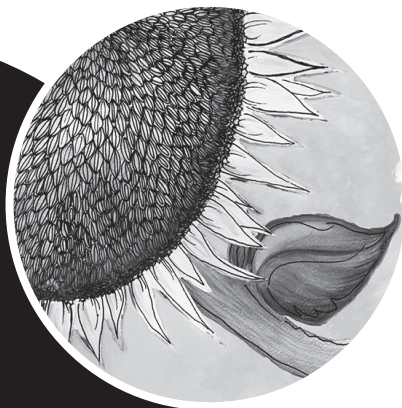


2. Sprout sunflower seeds in your classroom.

There's so much to learn about seeds. Open one or two packets for use by the classroom. Have students observe, describe and/or draw the sunflower seeds. Can your students predict what will happen when you plant the seeds? Let's see if they're right. Using seeds from the opened packets, start sprouting your sunflowers.

- 1. Gather seed containers. You can use small paper cups, egg cartons, seed trays, seed plugs or small "cups" made from folded newspaper.
- 2. Fill each one about 2/3 full with potting soil or seed starting mix. Place a seed in each cup. Push the seed down into the soil about 1/2 an inch and cover over. If you are using clear, plastic cups, place the seed at the side of the cup and push it down along the inside surface. You'll be able to watch roots and leaves develop right through the cup.
- 3. Keep your seeds moist. Water them by using a spray bottle, mister or a watering can with a diffuser spout. A direct pour of water from a cup or can will cause the seed and soil to move around. Give them enough water to keep the soil moist but not so much that there is water standing at the bottom of the container.
- 4. Place seed containers in a safe location where they can receive lots of light but won't be moved or knocked over very easily. Depending on the classroom temperature, your sunflowers should germinate (start to grow) and show their first leaves in just 3-10 days. Keep them happy, healthy and growing in your classroom until after the last frost date in your area. Then transplant them to a new home in the ground or a pot outside, where they can grow to their full height. Sunflowers do best in a sunny location, when temperatures are warm and days are long.

Find word puzzles,
easy experiments
and many more
free, downloadable
sunflower-related
activities at our website
EarthsBirthday.org



3. Take the Sunflower Challenge!

We challenge your students to use what they've learned about plants. Can they grow their own sunflowers from tiny seeds all the way to blooming plants? Send home a seed packet and A Note to Families (on reverse side of this sheet) with each child. Students that send in a picture of themselves with their home-grown sunflowers will receive a prize from our treasure trove of Earth-friendly gifts. How many Sunflower Challenge champions can your classroom generate?

A Note to Families

Grow a small one, grow a tall one.
Growing sunflowers is
easy and fun.

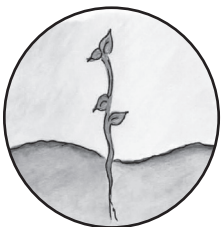


Your child's class has been participating in the Earth Birthday Project's *Sunflower Challenge*! The challenge gives students a hands-on learning experience with the wonder of growing plants. Everything starts with the class reading of *Every Seed Counts*, a book about a sunflower's lifecycle from seed to bloom and back to seed again. Students learn what a plant needs to grow and how plants provide food for people and animals. Next, students sprout sunflower seedlings in their classroom. Now it's time to put all that wonderful learning into meeting our challenge: **Can your child grow his or her own sunflower from a seed to a blooming plant at home?** If the answer is "Yes!", simply send us a picture of your child with the grown sunflowers and we'll send back a prize from our treasure trove of Earth-friendly gifts!

Here's how to take the *Sunflower Challenge*:



- Open the packet of sunflower seeds. Before you plant the seeds, take a close look at them with your child. You might want to count their strips or arrange them in order from smallest to largest. What can your child tell you about growing sunflower seeds? Find lots of free, sunflower-related activities you can do at home on our website, EarthsBirthday.org.



- Plant sunflower seeds at home in your yard or in a big flower pot. Your child's classroom has already learned how to start seeds. Ask him/her how to do it!



- Care for sunflower plants as they sprout and grow. Remember that plants need sunlight, water and good soil for taking in nutrients.
- When your sunflowers are blooming, take a picture of your child with the flowers he/she has grown from tiny seeds. Send the photo, along with name and mailing address to **Earths Birthday Project, PO Box 1536, Santa Fe, NM 87504** or email a digital photo to info@earthsbirthday.org. (Please note that we cannot return photographs.)
- Two to four weeks later, check your mailbox. Earth's Birthday Project will mail a special surprise to everyone who sends in a photo. It's our way of saying **"Thank you!"** for growing and caring for these beautiful flowers and **"Great job!"** for successfully growing your sunflower from seed to bloom.

Earth's Birthday Project
Inspiring wonder, learning and care for our Earth
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Take the Sunflower
Challenge!