

Sunflowers

Photo credit: Manitoba Crop Alliance

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUNFLOWERS

Known for its large yellow flower heads and edible seeds, the sunflower is **native to North America**, and was first cultivated by Indigenous people around 3000 BC. Sunflowers have grown in Canada for over 100 years and are a diverse, sustainable, valuable crop for farmers. Today they are grown for **seed and oil**.

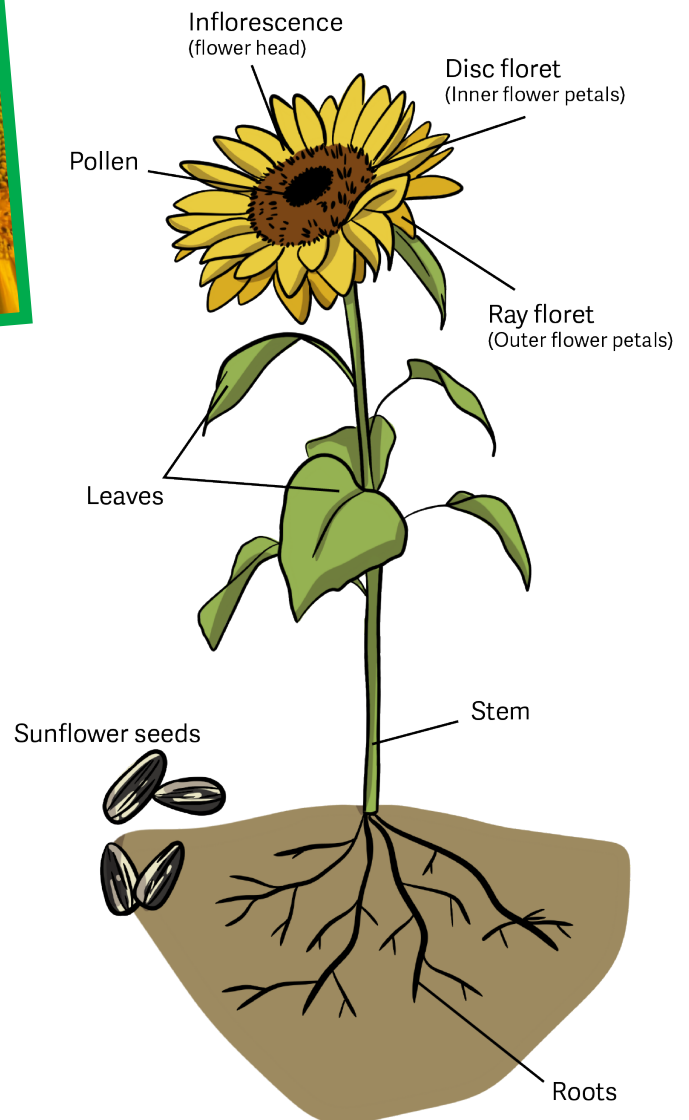


Photo credit: Manitoba Crop Alliance

THEY'RE CALLED SUNFLOWERS FOR A REASON

And it's not just because they look like the sun! Sunflowers are **heliotropic**, which means that for part of their growth cycle, they follow the sun from east to west during the day and return to face the east during the night.

Another cool fact: A single sunflower head is actually composed of thousands of individual flowers, fused together in what is called a **composite flower**.





OILSEED VS. CONFECTION SUNFLOWERS

About 75 per cent of our sunflower plants are grown to be crushed for **oil production** or sold as **bird seed**. The remaining 25 per cent have larger-striped hulls (shells) and are grown for **human consumption**. These are the kind you eat as a snack or use in cooking and baking!

THE BUZZ ABOUT BEES

Honeybees are an important part of sunflower production. Honeybee colonies located near sunflower fields will **pollinate** the crop. This is great for the bees, the beekeepers, and the sunflower growers! The flowers produce lots of nectar and pollen for the bees, and honeybee pollination produces bigger sunflower yields.



Because they're high in protein, sunflower seeds can be eaten as a meat alternative.

PACKED WITH NUTRITION

Sunflower seeds and oils contain almost every vitamin except vitamin C, and boast high amounts of key minerals, including **magnesium, iron, copper, zinc, and more**. They're even great for **livestock**. Sunflower seeds that have been damaged during harvest or crushed into meal during oil production can provide high-energy feed for livestock because of their high fat content.