



Origins

Ancient Peruvian sun worshippers revered the sunflower, which derives its name from the Greek words helios, meaning “sun,” and anthos, meaning “flower.” A native of North America, *Helianthus annuus*, the best-known of these bold, cheery flowers grows as an annual, and is a member of the Asteraceae family. Popular cultivars include ‘Abendsonne,’ with its 7- to 8-foot-tall bronze-centered yellow flowers, ‘Full Sun,’ a gold-yellow 3- to 4-foot flower, ‘Goldburst,’ a 3- to 4-inch-wide double-flowered golden bloom, and ‘Sunbright,’ a long-lasting variety with 4- to 5-inch-wide flower heads. Minature varieties such as ‘Sonia,’ pictured at right, are also available. *Helianthus decapetalus*, a smaller-flowered species, is also useful in floral design. Although sunflowers can reach diameters as large as 1 foot, the varieties used by florists average about 6 inches across.

Availability and Vase Life

Sunflowers are available year-round, with supplies peaking in June through October. Sunflowers have a vase life of 6-12 days when properly cared for.

Care and Handling

Water stress and aging, evidenced by foliage deterioration and leaf yellowing, are the flower’s most common problems. Cut sunflower stems under water. Remove leaves that will fall below the waterline. The flowers’ weighty heads require special attention in floral design. Select vases of sufficient size and depth to support the stems.

Sunflowers dry well. Prop several stems in a vase, or hang them in a well-ventilated, warm area and allow them to air dry.

Design Uses

Sunflowers’ bright colors and attention-getting blooms make them perfect mass or focal flowers in a variety of designs. They’re particularly nice additions to garden-style bouquets or arrangements with a rustic flavor.

Sunflower

(*Helianthus annuus*)



Information courtesy of Extra Touch Florist Association, www.etfassociation.org
Images courtesy of Colombia Flower Council, California Cut Flower Commission

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