

Cultural Details: **Sunflower for cut flower production**

A popular outdoor Summer cut flower crop, which can also be grown at high densities in glasshouses/polytunnels.

Variety Selection

Newer pollen-free types are less messy for the customer. Moles Seeds offers a wide range of cut flower varieties; we advise sowing a range of types, to see which suit your particular conditions/market.

Programming the crop

Sow mid April to mid June, for flowering plants around 10 weeks later at peak season (12-14 weeks for earliest outdoor sowings).

Protected Cropping

Direct sow into the soil, at around 1cm deep, or sow into large-celled plug trays first and transplant from those. Germinate at 18-20 °C, this should take around 5-7 days in the plug tray, 10 days if direct sown. Plant through Chrysanthemum netting to give the plants support, and ensure that adequate water is available in the early stages. As plants establish and grow away, it is possible to reduce the watering, and do not over-feed, as this will result in excessive growth. Use a spacing of around 12cm for the pollen-free types, double this for the traditional branching varieties.

Outdoor Cropping

Sunflower can be grown as an outdoor crop direct sown after the last frosts. Sow 2-3cm deep, germination should be 2-3 weeks depending on temperature, and subsequent crop growth should be very fast. Plants are sturdy enough not to require any support, except in the most exposed locations. Drill in rows approximately 30cm apart in beds, allowing space for access to cut the flowers. Cut the flowers just before the first ray petals open. Treatment of the stems with a holding solution can preserve vase life.

Pest and Disease

There should not be too much problem with pest and disease, but monitor for Aphids, Whitefly and Red Spider, and treat accordingly. Keep good air movement through the indoor crop to minimise Botrytis attack, and maintain good glasshouse hygiene throughout the growing crop.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.