

GARDEN SPOT

We have high hopes for sunflower contest



MARTY FIGLEY

I hope you are planning to enter our second High Hopes sunflower contest this year. The prizes are bigger than ever and the following businesses have been VERY GENEROUS with donations: Goldner Walsh Nursery Inc. of Pontiac, Bordines Better Blooms of Rochester and Clarkston, Telly's Greenhouse and Garden Center of Troy, and English Gardens of West Bloomfield.

Here are some growing tips that our last year's winners shared: The plants need to be watered regularly; Stern's Miracle-Gro and Rapid Grow, and other fertilizers, composted grass and leaves and manure ensure they get their "vitamins." We are looking for the tallest sunflower and the one with the largest seed head.

Sunflowers belong to the Compositae (Daisy) family; the genus name is Helianthus, which comes from two Greek words, *helios* ("sun") and *anthos* ("flower").

Sunflowers were planted in the 19th century by American settlers as protection against malaria and all parts of the plant were used for various purposes. For instance, leaves and stalks for fodder, fibers from the stalks to make cloth, leavies dried and smoked like tobacco. The seed husks were ground and made into a beverage and young sprouts and seeds were eaten, while the oil from the seeds was used to make soap and used in cooking. The ray flowers of the bloom produced a yellow dye.

Nearer to home, American Indians

cultivated sunflowers along Lake Huron, and they ground seeds for flour and used the oil from the seeds for mixing paints, cooking and a hair dressing.

Sunflower sprouts

Speaking of sprouting, you might like to try your hand at this with black sunflower seeds and use the sprouts in salads. It is easy to do. You'll need a large-mouthed jar with a cover that has holes or a cheesecloth covering to keep the seeds from spilling out when you rinse the seeds. You can also use a bowl.

Put about an inch of seeds in the jar and rinse with cold water, drain, add lukewarm water to cover generously, and soak the seeds for 12 to 16 hours. The seeds will swell, so be sure to use enough water. Now drain and rinse with lukewarm water and drain again, thoroughly. Place the jar on its side to distribute the seeds evenly and set in a dark place at room temperature. Two to four times each day rinse the seeds and again drain them well. Be patient, it may take up to six days to see the sprouts!

When birds start to visit your flower, cover the head by enclosing it in securely fastened cheesecloth or black landscape fabric. The heads can be harvested when two-thirds of the seeds are mature. Covered seed heads are ready to harvest when the back of the head is brown and no traces of green remain. If you don't cover the head, a cloth on the ground will catch the seeds.

Cut the stalk, leaving a two-foot stem, and hang in a warm, ventilated place. When the backs are really brown and papery, brush the seed out with your hands or a stiff brush. Don't wash them — they may mold. Store the har-

vested seeds in the refrigerator in an air-tight container for several months; they can be roasted for a nutritious snack.

On the other hand, if you want the birds to have a treat, just leave the seedhead on the stalk and enjoy the show!

Rules

Submit entries as follows, postmarked by 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 1: On a plain piece of paper, clearly print or type your name, address and phone number (including area code) and the best time of day to call if we wish to measure your entry and/or take photos. Children should include their ages. Your comments about how you cared for the plants can also be sent along with the entry. This information will be passed on to our readers when we announce the winners.

These are the rules:

1. Winner will be the person who grows the tallest sunflower in the 1995 season through Sept. 1. First, second and third prizes will be awarded.

2. Measurement must be taken from

soil level to the base of the head where the stem attaches to the flower.

3. Participants must notify the Observer and Eccentric newspapers by 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 1. Call (313) 963-2047, Ext. 1859, or (810) 801-2269; fax (810) 644-1314; or write 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009. Judges will contact finalists to verify height.

4. A prize of honorable mention will be given for the sunflower with the largest seedhead. Measurement must be taken diagonally.

5. Winners will be announced in the newspaper Thursday, Sept. 7.

6. Employees and families of the Observer and Eccentric newspapers aren't eligible.

7. Decisions of the judges are final.

8. Entrants must live in Oakland or Wayne County to be eligible.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 963-2047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1859. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.



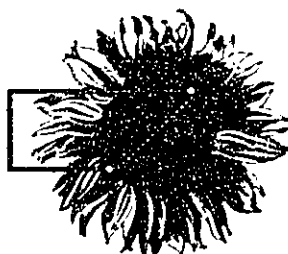
MARTY FIGLEY

Sunny sight: Sunflowers are a sight to behold, especially when they glow in the sun.

HIGH HOPES CONTEST

We're looking for the tallest sunflower, and for the sunflower with the largest seed head, grown in the 1995 season through Sept. 1. The sunflower's height is to be measured from the soil level to the base of the head where the stem attaches to the flower. The head is to be measured diagonally. If you're raising a super sunflower, let us know. Call 313-963-2047, Ext. 1859, or 810-801-2269; fax 810-644-1314, or write the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009. Deadline is 5 p.m. Sept. 1.

Seed head
is to be
measured
diagonally



Height
is to be
measured
from soil
level to
stem neck
(fourth)